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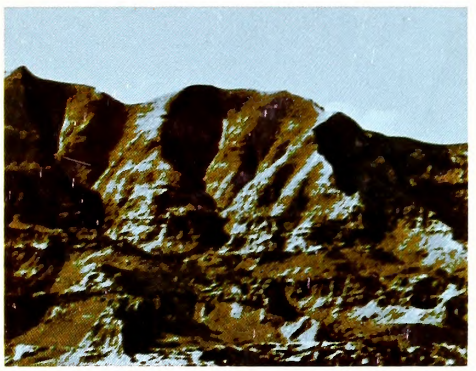
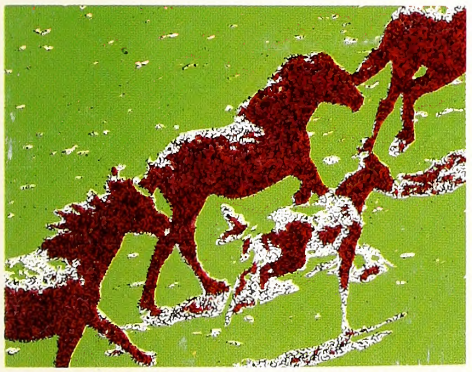
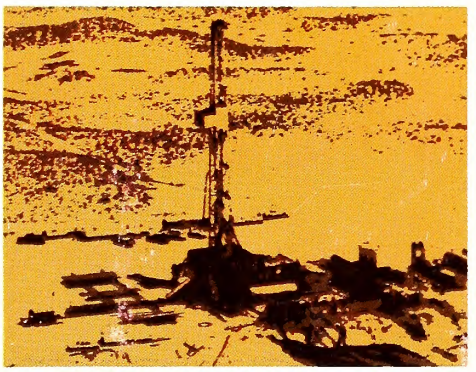
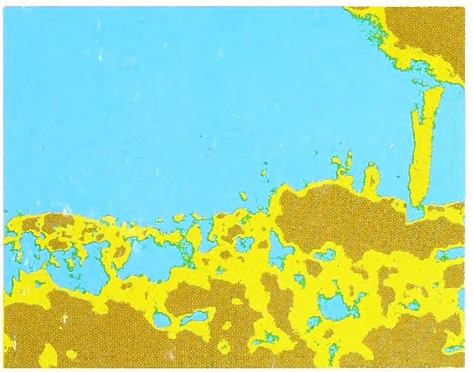
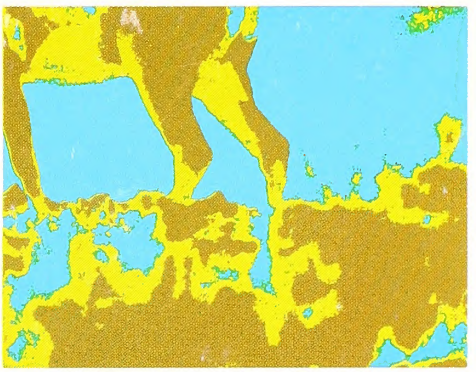
›MING Land Use Decisions

Natrona



U. S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR • BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Lands

Minerals

Rangeland Management

Recreation **Wildlife** **Soil, Water, Air**

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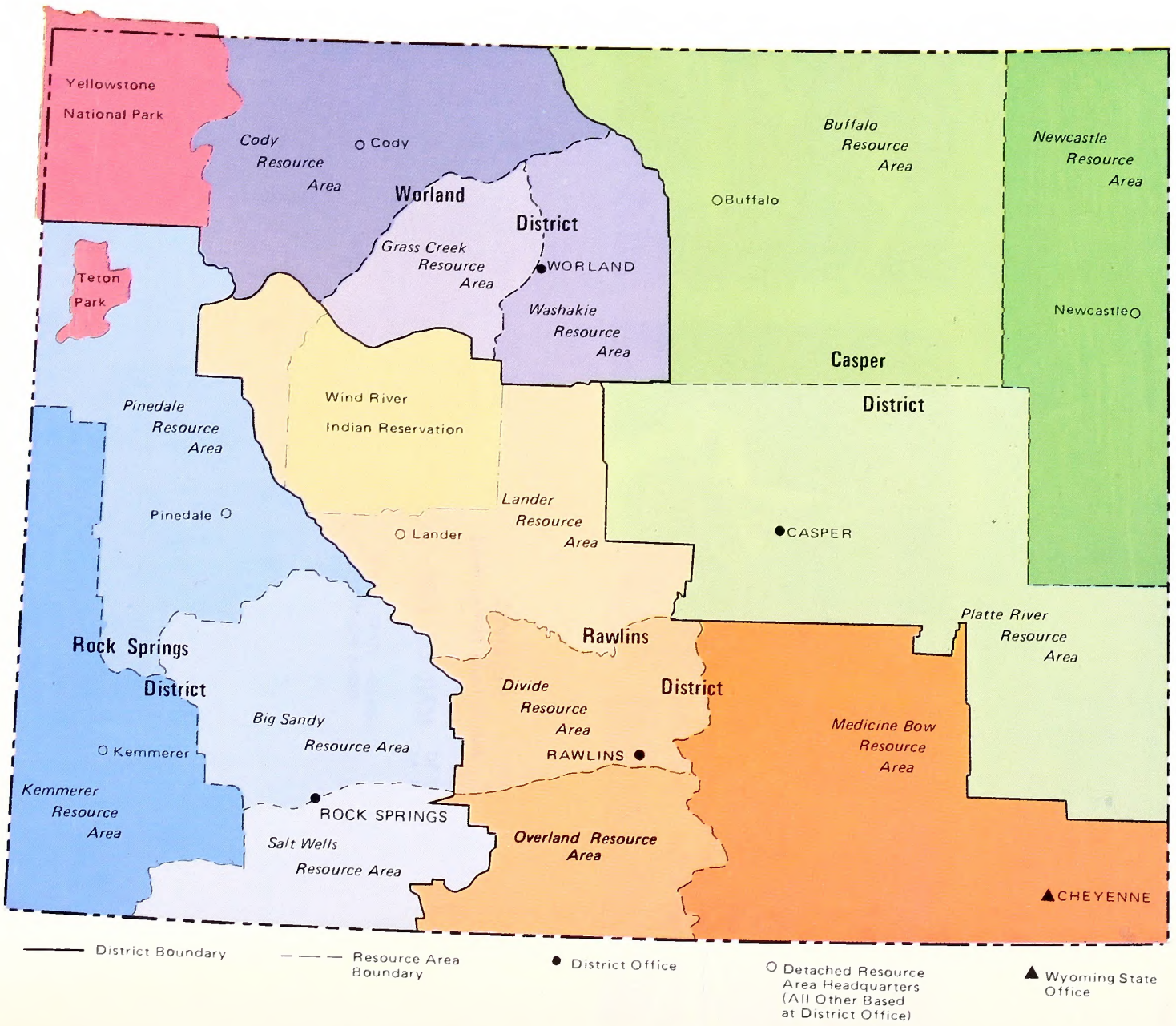
Bureau of Land Management Offices in Wyoming



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Purpose

This brochure summarizes the Management Framework Plan (MFP) decisions for public lands and federal mineral estate in the Natrona planning unit.

The plan is an update of the Hole-in-the-Wall and Bates Hole Management Framework Plans completed in 1970. The update reflects new laws, changes in resource management policy and public needs, and new resource data. The plan will be updated as these kinds of factors continue to change.

My staff and I wish to thank the many organizations and individual citizens who contributed information and ideas to this plan. If you have questions or if you would like to review specific portions of the MFP at the Casper office, please let us know.

Robert E. Wilber
Casper District Manager
November 1980

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Table of Contents

Purpose and Description of Plan 3
The Planning Area 5
Management Decisions
Lands 8
Minerals 20
Rangeland Management 26
Recreation 29
Wildlife 37
Soil, Water, Air 43
Cumulative Environmental Overview 48
Interrelationships with other plans 49
Actions After the Land Use Plan 49
Glossary 50
Comment Sheet 53

Maps

General Location Map 4
Natrona Planning Unit 6
Site for Natrona County School District 9
Lands Available for Natrona County Parks 10
Acres to be Considered for Waste Disposal and Exchange 11
Platte River 13
Agricultural Lands Inventory 15, 16, 17
Transmission and Transportation Corridors 19
Oil and Gas Leasing in Rattlesnake Mountain 23
Sand and Gravel Sales 24
Summary of Restricted and Closed Areas — Oil and Gas Development 25
Grazing Allotments and Deer Creek Horse Area 28
Red Wall Area 31
Recreation Decisions for Fremont Canyon, North Platte River and Motor Vehicle Restrictions 32
Oregon Trail 33
Pterodactyl Paleontological Site 35
Public Access 36
Bald Eagle Habitat Management Areas 39
Big Game Habitat Management Areas 40
Salt Creek Drainage — Area of Critical Environmental Concern 45
Oil and Gas Development 47

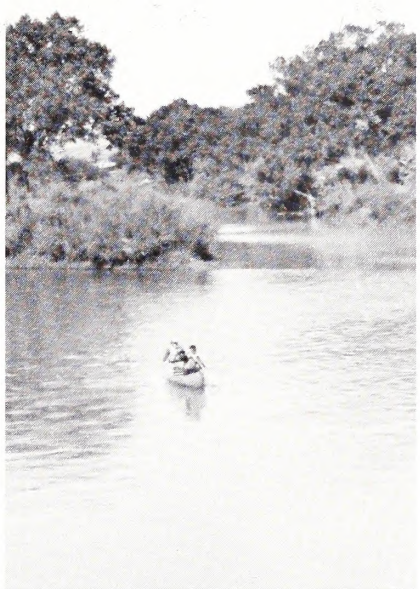
PURPOSE AND DESCRIPTION OF PLAN

The Management Framework Plan serves as a guide for management of the public lands as well as the federal mineral estate, much of which lies under privately owned surface.

The plan includes narrative and graphic displays of land use decisions, supported by the rationale and a summary of public input for each resource program: lands and realty, energy and minerals, range, forestry, watershed, recreation and wildlife habitat.

The land use decisions apply only to public lands and federal mineral estate administered by BLM.

The MFP is a working document. It is a guide for day-to-day activity. The planning decisions allocate resources and land uses, thereby defining and resolving use conflicts. Program objectives and land use allocations set forth in the MFP provide guidelines for developing specific activity plans for management of each resource program.

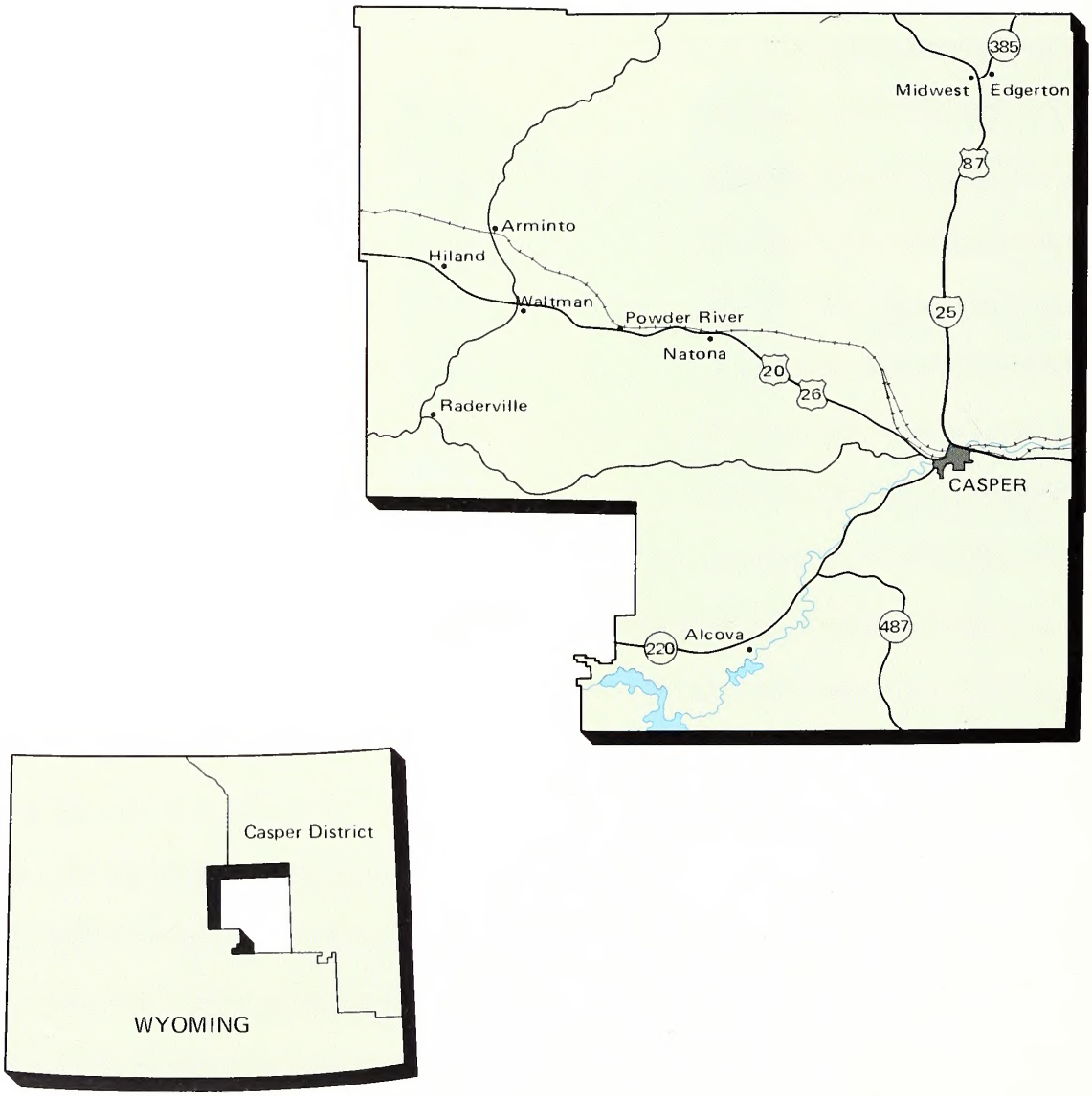


Canoeing in the Platte River

This plan does not address the BLM's wilderness review program which is nearing the completion of the inventory phase. This phase is being conducted under procedures developed especially for wilderness review. The inventory phase will end by November 15, 1980 with the issuance of a final decision on establishment of Wilderness Study Areas. Wilderness Study Areas will be included in future planning.

Additional information on wilderness review can be obtained from BLM's Casper Office.

General Location Map



THE PLANNING AREA

The Natrona Planning Unit is within the Platte River Resource Area of BLM's Casper District. Although Natrona County contains approximately 3.4 million acres, the Natrona Planning Unit includes only about 3 million acres. The remaining land, which lies in the southwest corner of the county, is part of the Rawlins BLM District.

Surface ownership in the planning unit is mixed (see Table 1 and Map 1), but BLM manages about 80% of the mineral estate.

Prominent topographic features in the planning unit include Casper and Muddy Mountains in the southeast, the Rattlesnake Mountains in the southwest and the southern Bighorn Mountains in the north. A segment of the North Platte River and Alcova and Pathfinder Reservoirs lie within the planning unit. The Salt Creek oil field is in the northeast corner of Natrona County. Casper is the principal community.

Resource Values

BLM administers a wide range of valuable public resources in the planning unit. Large deposits of energy minerals such as oil and gas and uranium have the potential to help meet regional and national energy needs. Many of Wyoming's ranchers have grazed their cattle or sheep for some time on BLM-administered public lands. The mountainous areas, the North Platte River and the river's impoundments are prime recreation areas. Wildlife habitat occurs throughout the area, including some which is important to bald eagles.

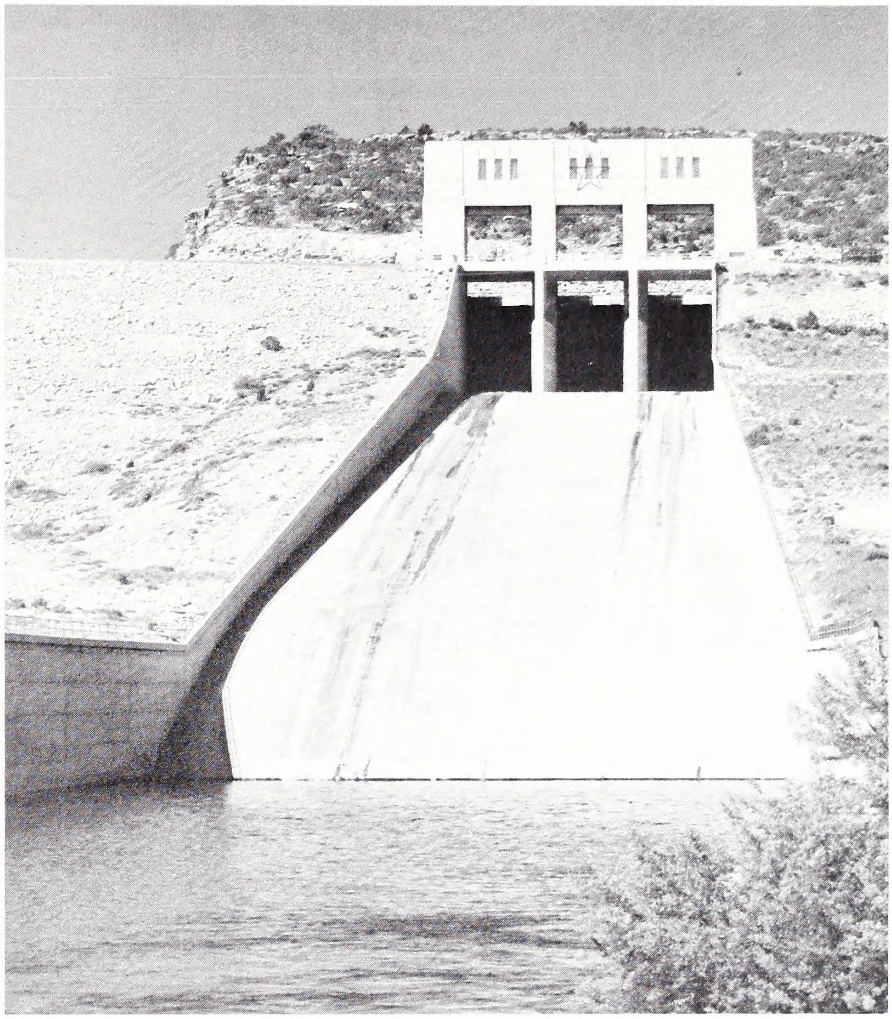
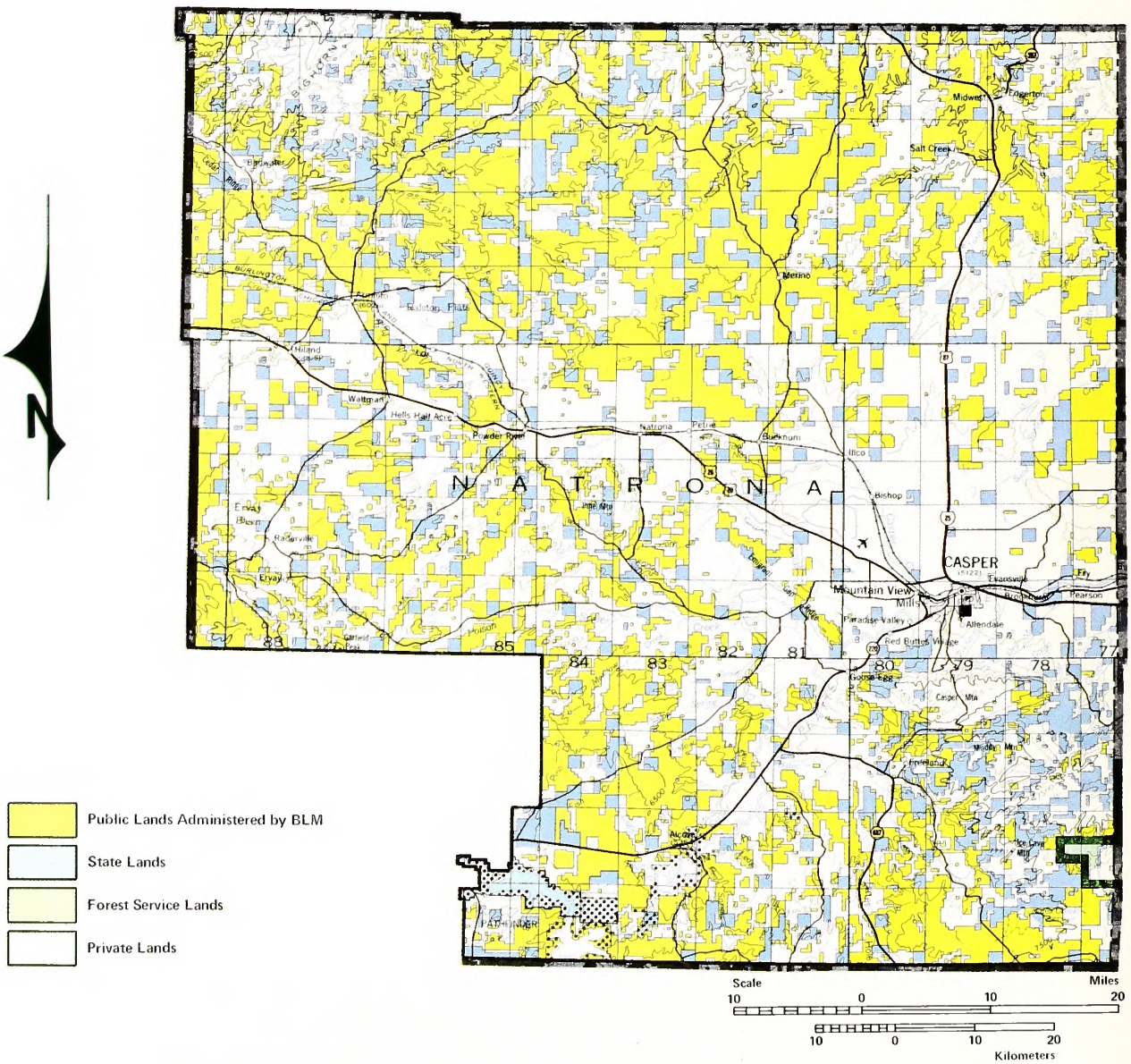


Table 1.
Surface Ownership
Natrona Planning Unit

	Acres	Percent of Planning Unit
Private	1,497,363.33	50%
Water & Power Resources Service	20,250	1%
State of Wyoming	338,469	11%
Forest Service	5,680	
BLM	1,153,385.7	38%

Map 1.
Natrona Planning Unit



Public Lands Administered by BLM

State Lands

Forest Service Lands

Private Lands

MANAGEMENT DECISIONS

A view of Casper Mountain taken from Muddy Mountain

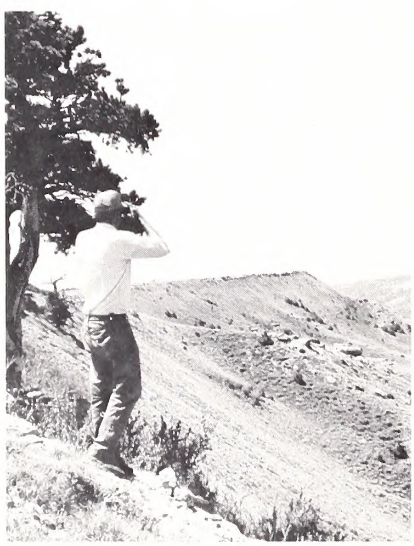
Lands

Program Description

The lands (realty) program supports other BLM resource management activities, as well as those of local, state and other federal agencies. It includes such actions as planning, classification, appraisal, exchanges, sales, record maintenance, and the administration of leases, rights-of-way and land use permits.

Lands with unusual values can be designated for specific purposes. Examples are withdrawal of lands for recreation development and preservation of wilderness, cultural or historic values.

BLM can also provide land for community expansion and other public purposes. This could include private development where such ownership would best serve the public interest.



Jackson Canyon

Resource Description

The planning unit contains about three million acres in Natrona County. About 38% of the land surface is under BLM administration, 11% is state, 1% is Forest Service and 50% is private.

(Note: Public lands refer to those administered by BLM).

The major concentrations of public land in the planning unit lie along the southern border and in the northern half of Natrona County.

Requests have been made by Natrona county for transfer of public lands for recreation and public purposes. Industrial development, primarily related to energy minerals, creates a demand on public lands for pipeline, power line and road rights-of-way.

Multiple Use Objective

Manage and develop public lands to maintain a quality environment, to help meet the public's need for lands and resources, and to contribute to the stability and orderly growth of public land users, industries, communities and regions.

Multiple Use Decisions

1. Schools and Parks (see Maps 2 and 3)

The following lands will be made available for county schools and parks under the authority of the Recreation and Public Purposes Act:

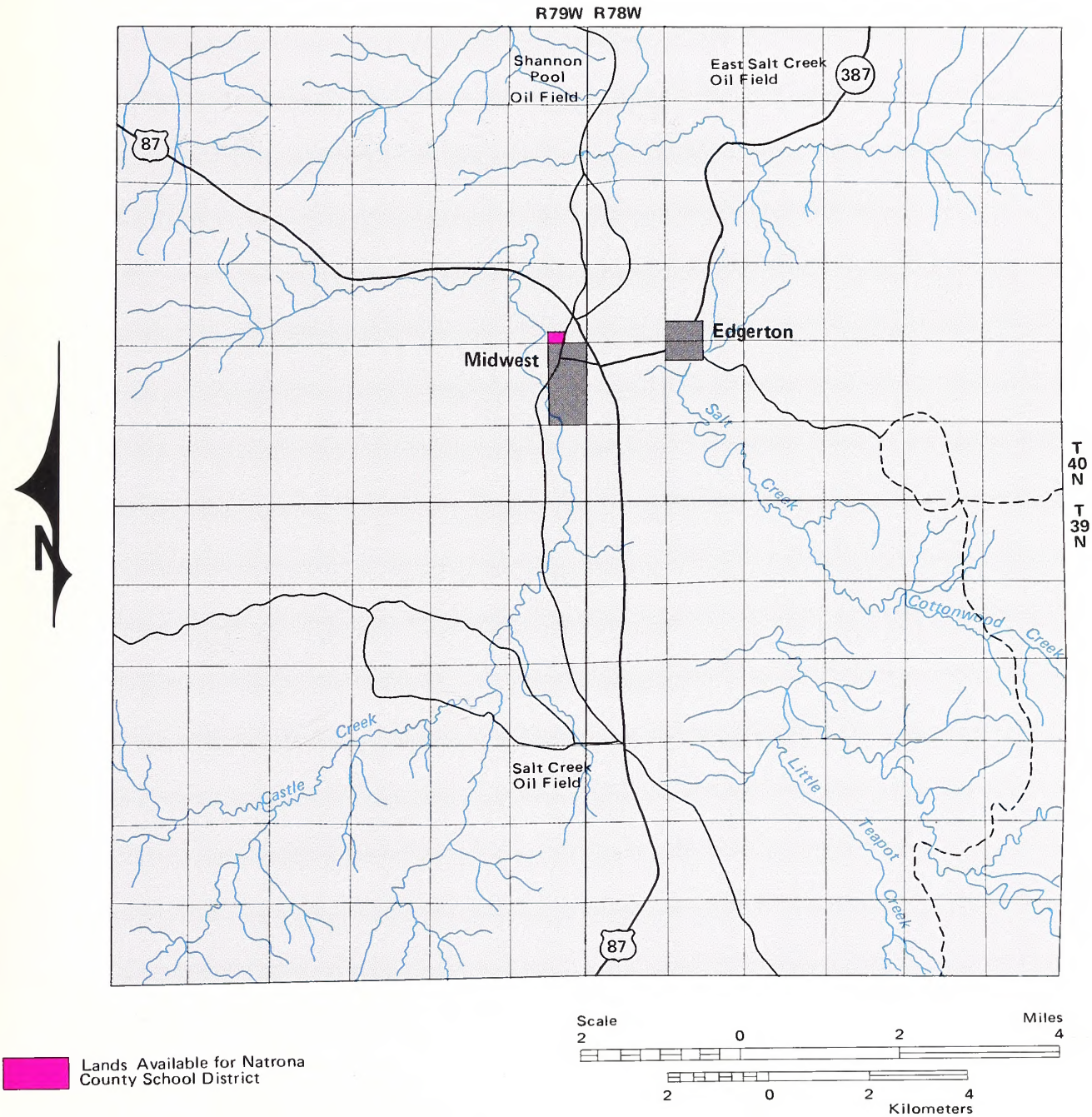
For schools (Midwest/Edgerton)
T. 40 N., R. 79 W., Sec. 24;
S½ SW¼ SE¼

For Parks (Casper Mountain)
public lands in,
T. 32 N., R. 78 W., excluding Sections 30 and 31
T. 32 N., R. 79 W., excluding Sections 25 through 36

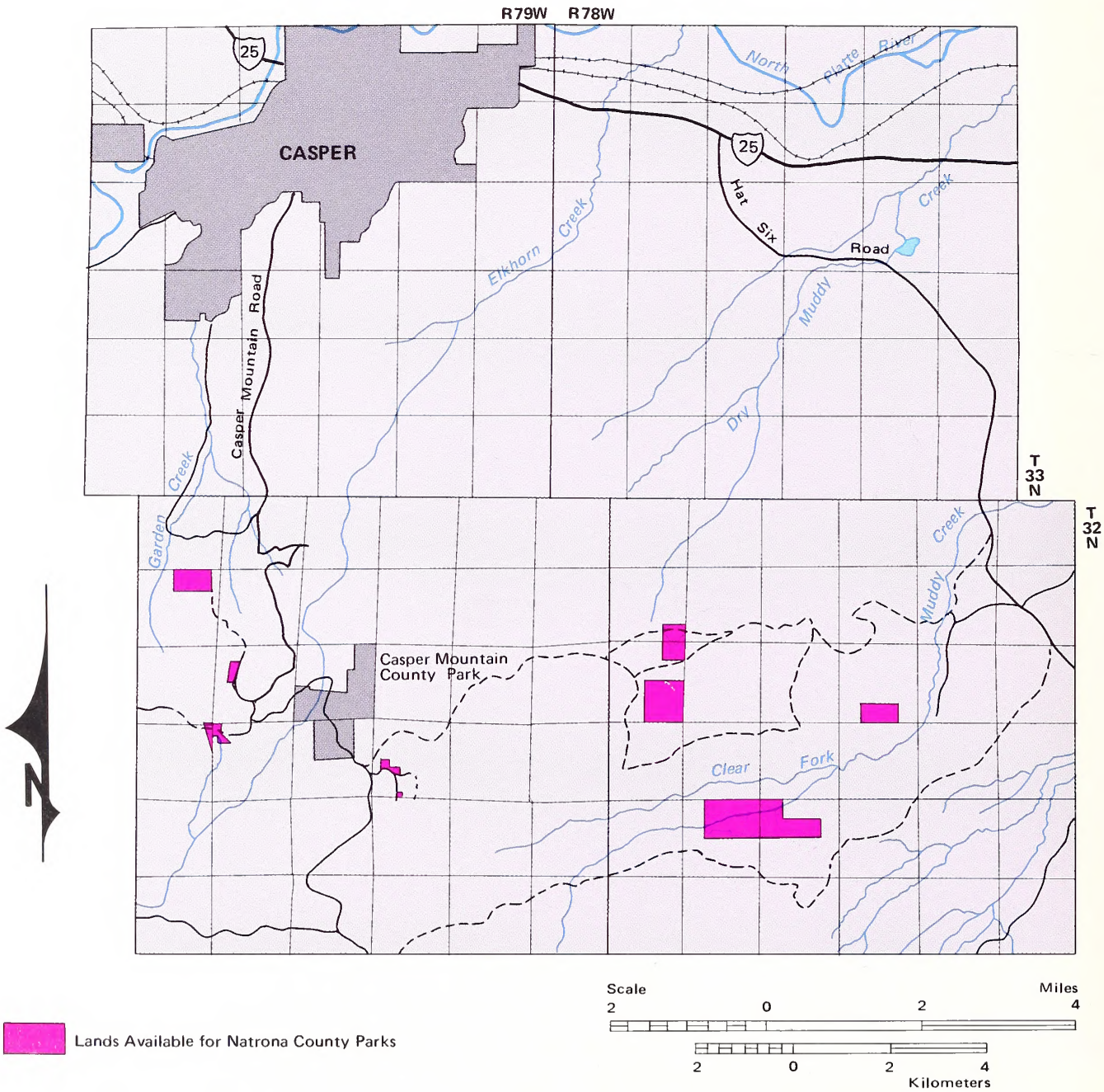
Rationale: The comprehensive county land use plan points out the increasing pressure to provide land for schools, landfills, sewage facilities, public utilities and recreation. When possible, public lands should be used to help meet such needs.

Midwest Elementary School

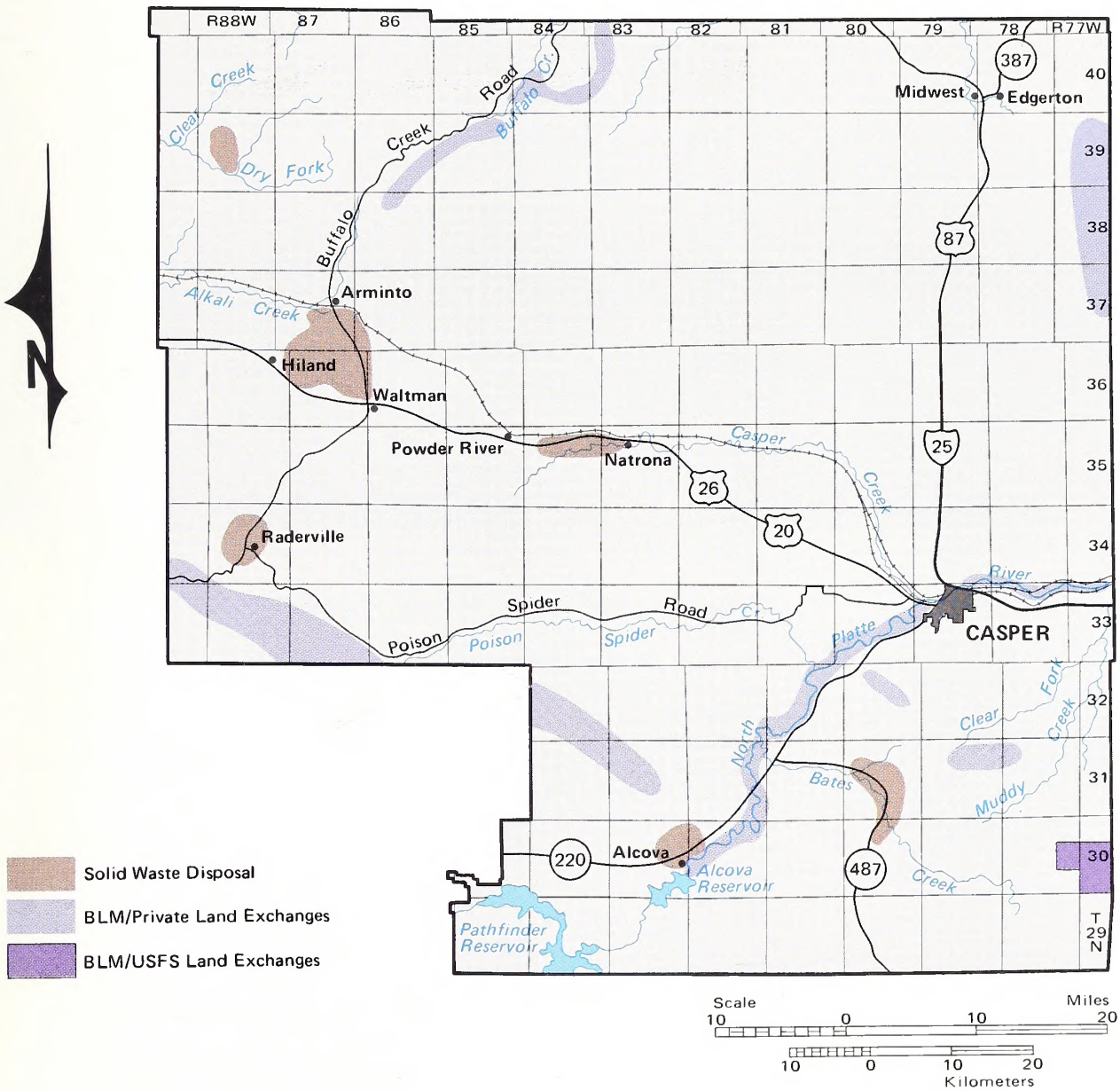
Map 2.
Site for Natrona County School District



Map 3.
Lands Available for Natrona County Parks



Map 4.
Areas to be Considered for Waste Disposal and Exchange



Illegal dumping in Natrona County

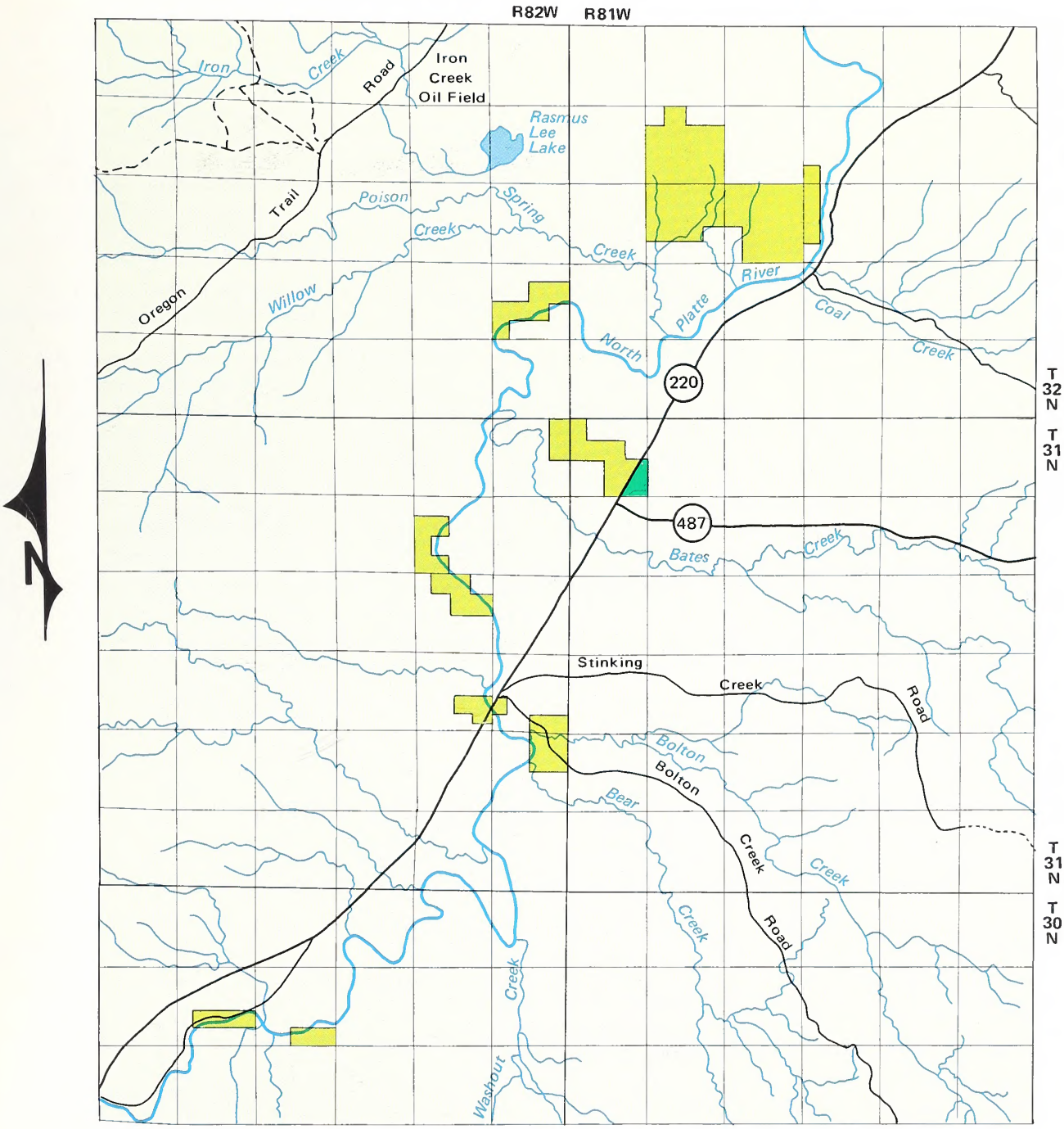
2. Solid Waste Disposal (see Map 4)

Initiate a cooperative effort with Natrona county to develop a countywide solid waste disposal plan by the end of 1984. Areas to be considered for waste disposal include:

- **—Arminto-Hiland-Waltman coop**
- **—Badwater**
- **—Raderville**
- **—Powder River-Natrona coop**
- **—Alcova**
- **—Medicine Bow Highway**

Rationale: State as well as federal statutes prescribe proper methods of solid waste disposal. A lack of available sites in rural areas has resulted in uncontrolled dumping of solid waste, which is detrimental to the public's welfare and lowers land quality. Public land has been seriously affected by uncontrolled dumping.

Map 5.
Platte River



Lands to be Retained Under Protective Withdrawal

Lands to be Evaluated for Withdrawal Revocation

Scale

Miles: 2 0 2 4

Kilometers: 2 0 2 4

3. Land Exchanges—BLM/ Private (see Map 4)

Investigate opportunities to acquire resources of high value to the public through public/private land exchanges. BLM is interested in acquiring lands in the following areas:

- **—North Platte River**
- **—Muddy Mountain**
- **—Jackson Canyon**
- **—Red Wall**
- **—Pine Ridge**
- **—Rattlesnake Mountains**

BLM is in the process of evaluating public lands in Natrona County which could be offered in exchange for private land.

Rationale: Fragmented land ownership creates opportunities for public/private land exchanges of benefit to both parties. In such transactions, BLM is looking for lands and resources that could provide more public use or greater protection for public values than the lands to be given up. Land exchanges are strictly voluntary and are negotiated by the parties involved.

4. Land Exchanges—BLM/ USFS (see Map 4)

Investigate boundary adjustment with the Forest Service.

Rationale: There are small areas containing BLM and U.S. Forest Service administered lands in Natrona, Converse and Platte Counties that could be administered more efficiently by one of the agencies. There are about 5,680 acres in the Natrona Planning Unit that will be evaluated for exchange.

5. Platte River Withdrawal (see Map 5)

Retain land under the Platte River Protective Withdrawal, in effect since 1973, with the exception of land east of Highway 220 in T. 31 N., R. 81 W., Section 6.

Rationale: These tracts of land are valuable for wildlife and recreation. With increasing population and demand for outdoor recreation, the tracts will have an ever-increasing value. They provide essential public access to the North Platte River.

The land east of Highway 220 in Section 6, which is two miles from the river, is not riparian in nature and does not contain wetlands. Based on demands identified in the Natrona Material Disposal Plan, it may be necessary to revoke the withdrawal on this tract. However, surface investigations will be required to show that valuable gravel deposits are present.

6. Agricultural Lands (see Map 6)

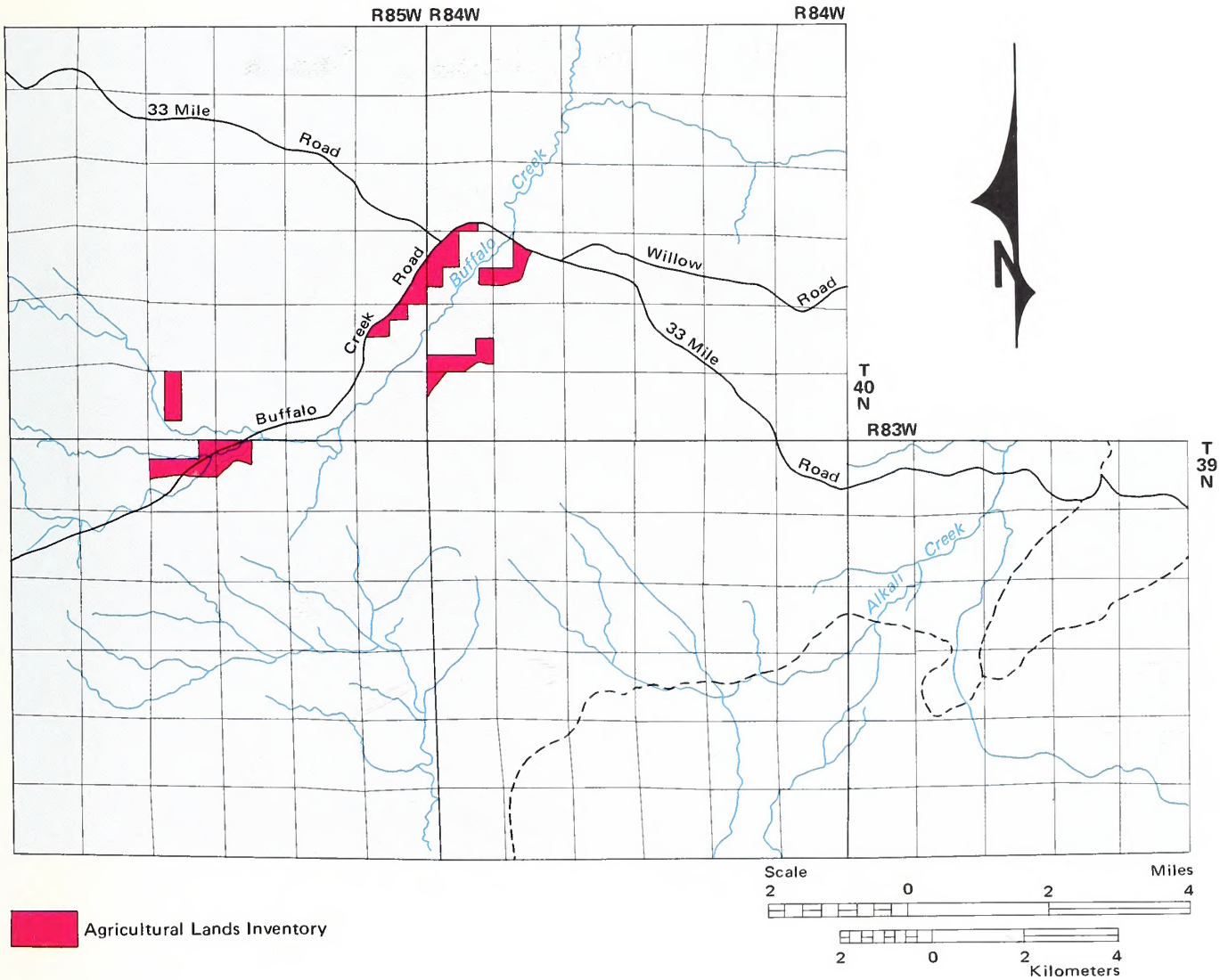
Inventory and identify public land which may be suited for agriculture use, via irrigation. If suitable, land may be leased, provided adequate water is available for irrigation, or transferred to private ownership under the Desert Land Law. If the lands are found unsuitable, applications for agricultural use will be rejected.

The following areas will be inventoried first for agricultural potential:

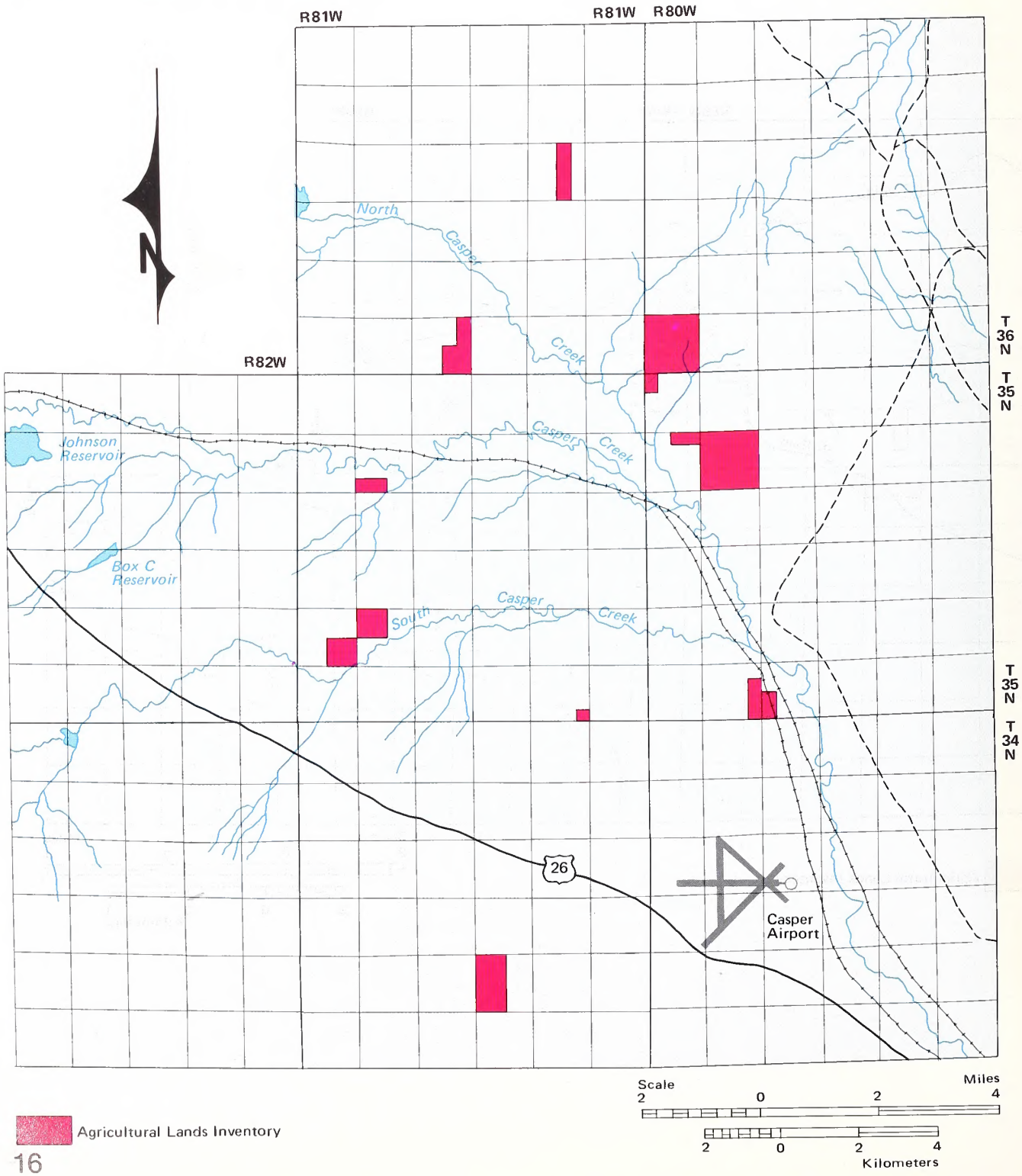
- **—Public land within the boundaries of the Kendrick Reclamation Project, excluding the North Platte River**
- **—Casper Creek and Casper Canal**
- **—Bates Creek**
- **—Buffalo Creek**

Rationale: Public lands suitable for agricultural development should be identified and made available for such use, provided that other resource values can be protected.

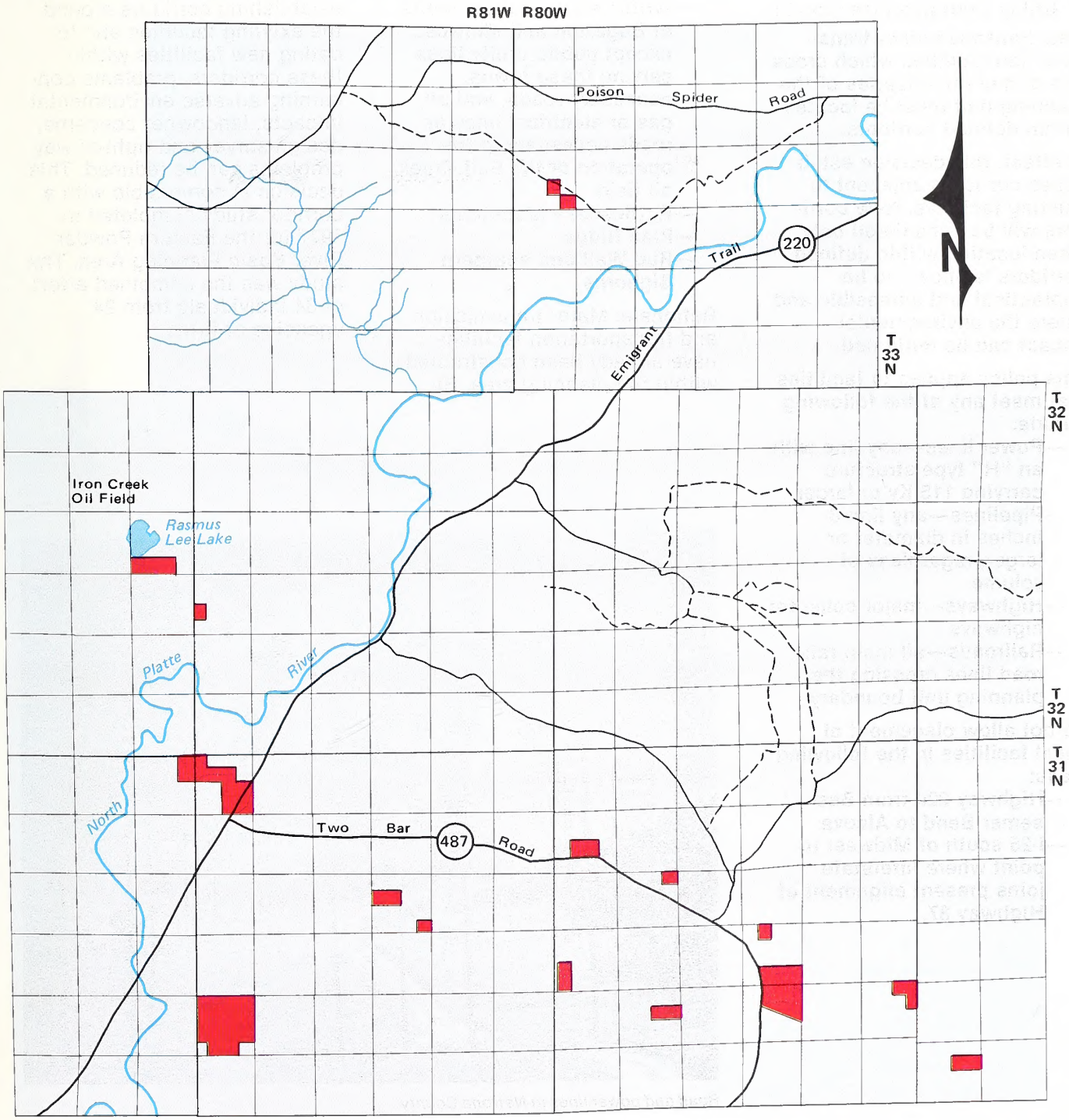
Map 6A.
Agricultural Lands Inventory



Map 6C.
Agricultural Lands Inventory



Map 6B.
Agricultural Lands Inventory



7. Utility Corridors (see Map 7)

New transmission or transportation facilities which cross one or more boundaries of the planning unit must be located within defined corridors.

In effect, this decision establishes corridors adjacent to existing facilities. New corridors will be considered only when location within defined corridors is shown to be impractical and unfeasible and where the environmental impact can be mitigated.

This policy applies to facilities that meet any of the following criteria:

- **—Power lines—any line with an "H" type structure carrying 115 Kv or larger**
- **—Pipelines—any line 6 inches in diameter or larger, regardless of volume**
- **—Highways—major collector highways**
- **—Railroads—all main railroad lines crossing the planning unit boundary**

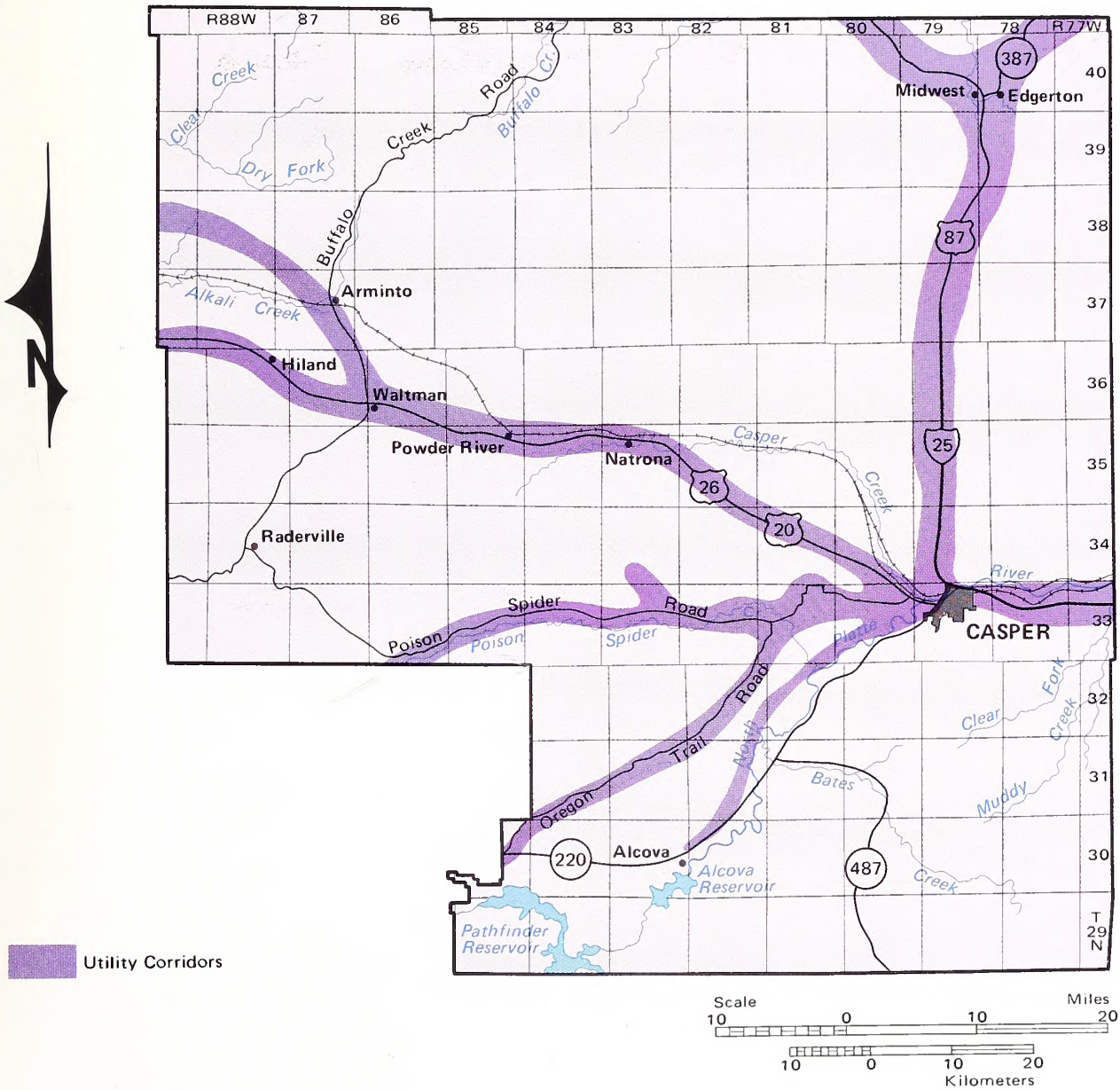
Do not allow placement of lineal facilities in the following areas:

- **—Highway 220 from Bessemer Bend to Alcova**
- **—I-25 south of Midwest to point where Interstate joins present alignment of Highway 87.**
- **—Within the corporate limits of Edgerton and Midwest, except public utility lines serving these towns, necessary roads, and oil, gas or electrical lines or roads necessary to the operation of the Salt Creek oil field**
- **—Rattlesnake Mountains**
- **—Pine Ridge**
- **—Red Wall and southern Bighorns**

Rationale: Major transmission and transportation facilities have already been constructed within the planning area. By establishing corridors around the existing facilities and locating new facilities within these corridors, problems concerning adverse environmental impacts, landowner concerns, design survey and right-of-way problems can be reduced. This decision is compatible with a corridor study completed in 1977 for the Eastern Powder River Basin Planning Area. The study was the combined effort of 34 individuals from 24 agencies or firms.

Road and power lines in Natrona County

Map 7.
Transmission and Transportation Corridors



Minerals

Program Description

In the historic disposal of land to private individuals and newly formed states, title to the subsurface rights were often separated. In conveying title, the federal government reserved rights to the underground minerals beneath millions of acres of land which passed into private ownership.

This distinction has important implications for the management of mineral resources in the planning unit.

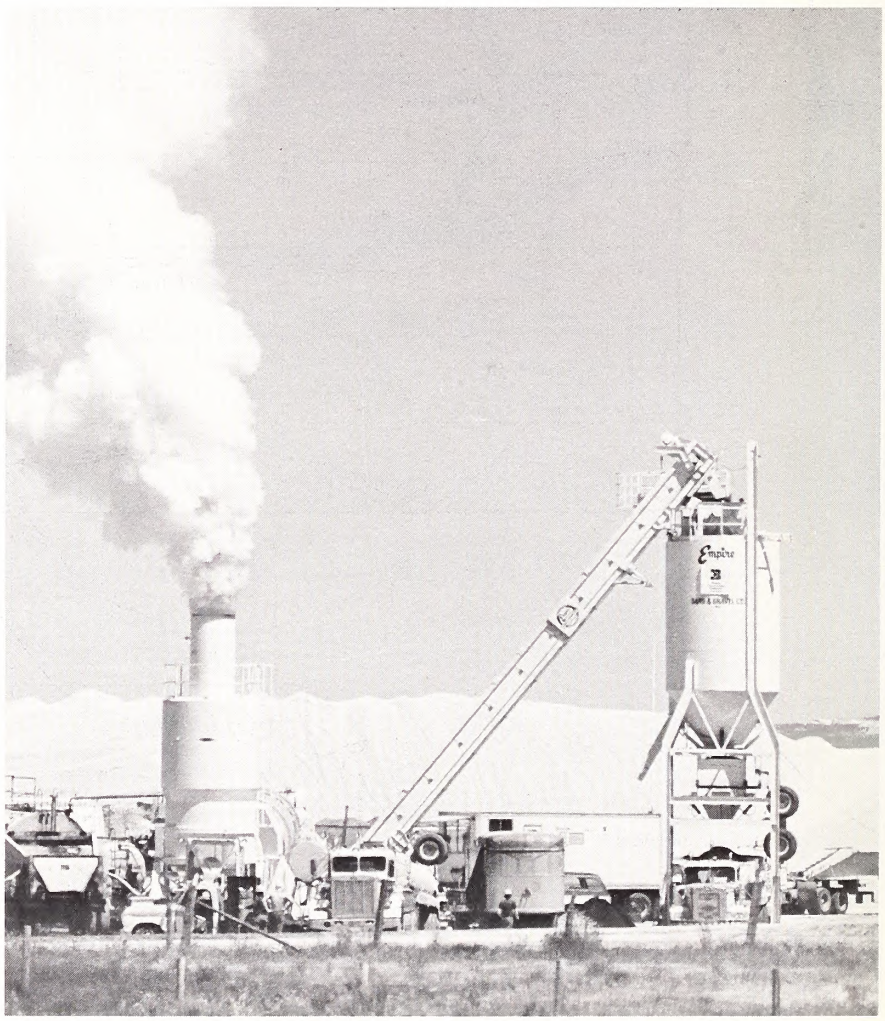
The minerals fall into three categories:

Locatable: Locatable minerals are minerals that may be claimed under the General Mining Law of 1872. Upon proof of mineral discovery and other legal requirements, claimants can obtain title to both the minerals and surface estate. Locatable minerals known to occur in commercial quantities within the planning area are uranium and bentonite.

Leasable: These are minerals that may be leased under the Mineral Leasing Act of 1920. Title to the mineral estate and the surface, if it is public land, is retained by the United States. Coal, oil and gas and trona are examples of leasable minerals found within the planning unit. Oil and gas are the most significant.

Salable: These are minerals that may be sold under the Materials Sale Act of 1947. Title to the mineral estate, and the surface if it is public land, is retained by the United States. These minerals include common varieties of sand, gravel, stone, clinker (scoria) and bentonite. These materials are in demand for energy-related construction activities.

The minerals program includes conducting examinations on mineral patent applications to determine the validity of the application; appraisal and disposing of minerals by lease, license and permit; coordinating exploration and mining activities with other land uses; and providing protection and reclamation of mined land.



Gravel crushing northwest of Midwest

Mining plans, environmental analysis and surface protection and rehabilitation measures are required for the lease or sale of minerals. There are no such requirements for the development of locatable minerals under the 1872 Mining Law; however, the Federal Land Policy and Management Act amended the 1872 law to prohibit "unnecessary and undue degradation" of public lands.

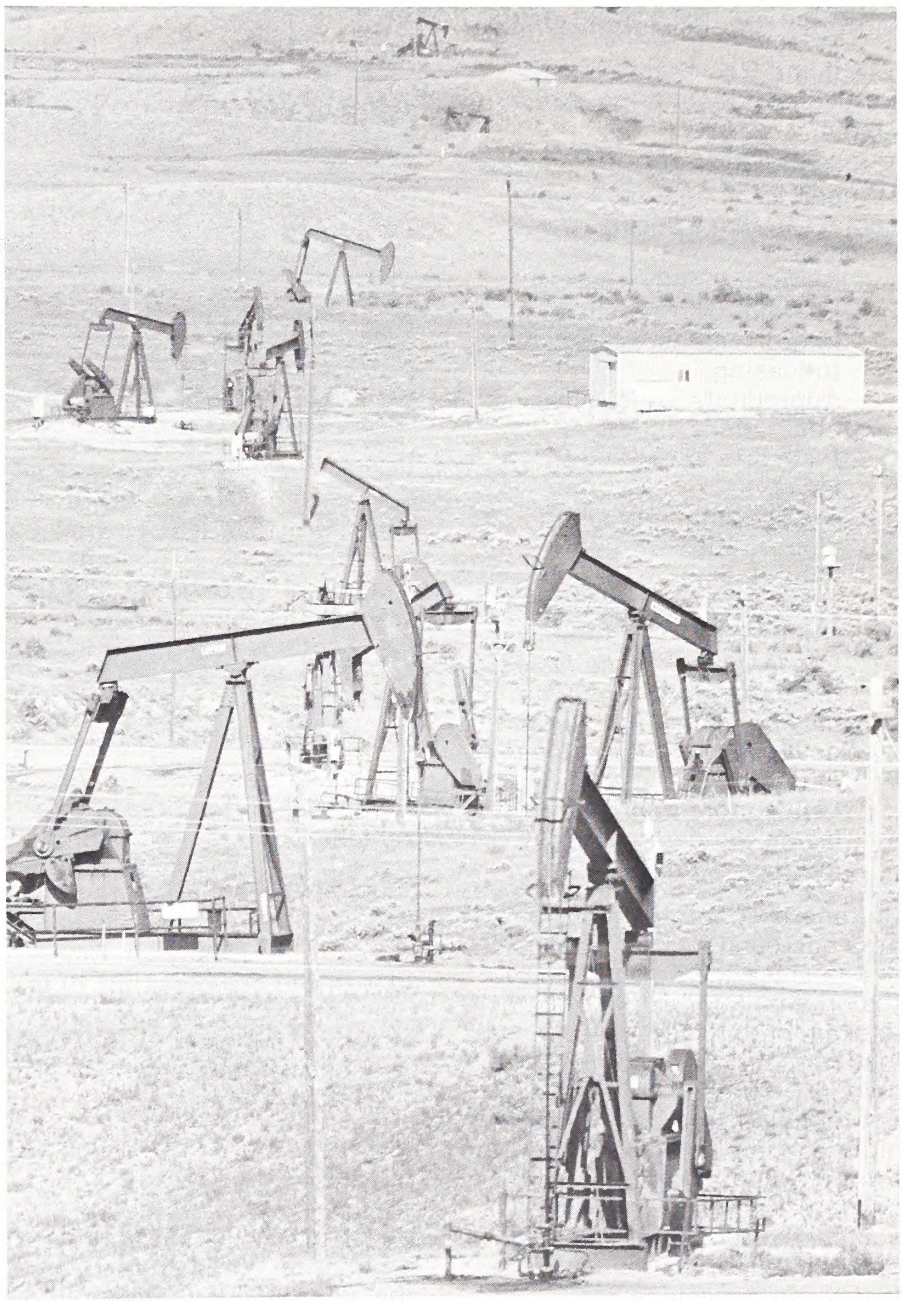
Resource Description

Mineral resources in the planning unit are a major source of public and private income. This revenue comes from the direct sale of minerals, from wages and salaries paid to employees and from taxes and royalties paid by industry to state, local and federal governments.

In 1978 oil and gas production in Natrona County accounted for 96% of the mineral valuation and amounts fo 30.3% of the total assessed county valuation. However, as oil and gas reserves are depleted and it becomes more difficult (and expensive) to discover new reserves, uranium production could become the dominant mineral industry in the planning unit.

Multiple Use Objectives

Manage mineral resources for efficient development, giving priority consideration to energy minerals but, at the same time, providing environmental protection and mitigation of socioeconomic impacts.



Salt Creek Oil Field

Multiple Use Decisions

1. Oil and Gas Leasing in Rattlesnake Mountains (see Map 8)

The Rattlesnake Mountains will be open to oil and gas leasing, subject to these special provisions:

- **—All lease applications will be field reviewed by an interdisciplinary team prior to leasing.**
- **—Appropriate mitigating stipulations will be attached to each offered lease.**
- **—Areas containing steep slopes, critical wildlife habitat, significant cultural values or visual resources will be handled as follows:** ***Lands up to ½ mile inside the perimeter of the area may be leased but surface occupancy will not be permitted.***
  Lands more than ½ mile inside the perimeter may not be leased.

Rationale: The Rattlesnake area has been in a no-leasing status since the completion of the original MFP in 1970. Upon re-examination, sufficient justification to maintain this area in a no-leasing status was not found. The area contains high resource values in the form of wildlife habitat, watershed, recreation and visual resources. Proper management of these resources requires that these provisions be considered for each lease application.

2. Sand and Gravel Sales (see Map 9)

Conduct competitive sand and gravel sales on the listed areas, provided that environmental impacts can be adequately mitigated. Conduct the sales in the following order:

- **—Sections 5 and 8, T. 31 N., R. 81 W. (Scott)**
- **—Section 11, T. 32 N., R. 78 W. (Hat Six/Mosteller)**

Rattlesnake Mountain

Rationale: Demand for sand and gravel in the Casper area is high due to rapid growth and a shortage of available supplies. Requests from eight different companies have been received in the past year. Since 80% of the gravel within 10 to 15 miles of Casper is federally owned, it is logical for BLM to sell some of its reserves to meet the growing demand.

3. Surface Protection plans for Oil and Gas fields

Prepare surface protection plans to provide uniform rehabilitation procedures for abandoned oil and gas facilities. Plans will be coordinated with U.S. Geological Survey, oil and gas operators and private landowners.

Rationale: The goal of the plans is surface rehabilitation that is completed as the final wells are abandoned. Oil field rehabilitation plans will allow orderly withdrawal from, and closure of, a field over a period of time.

Summary of Oil and Gas Restrictions (see Map 10)

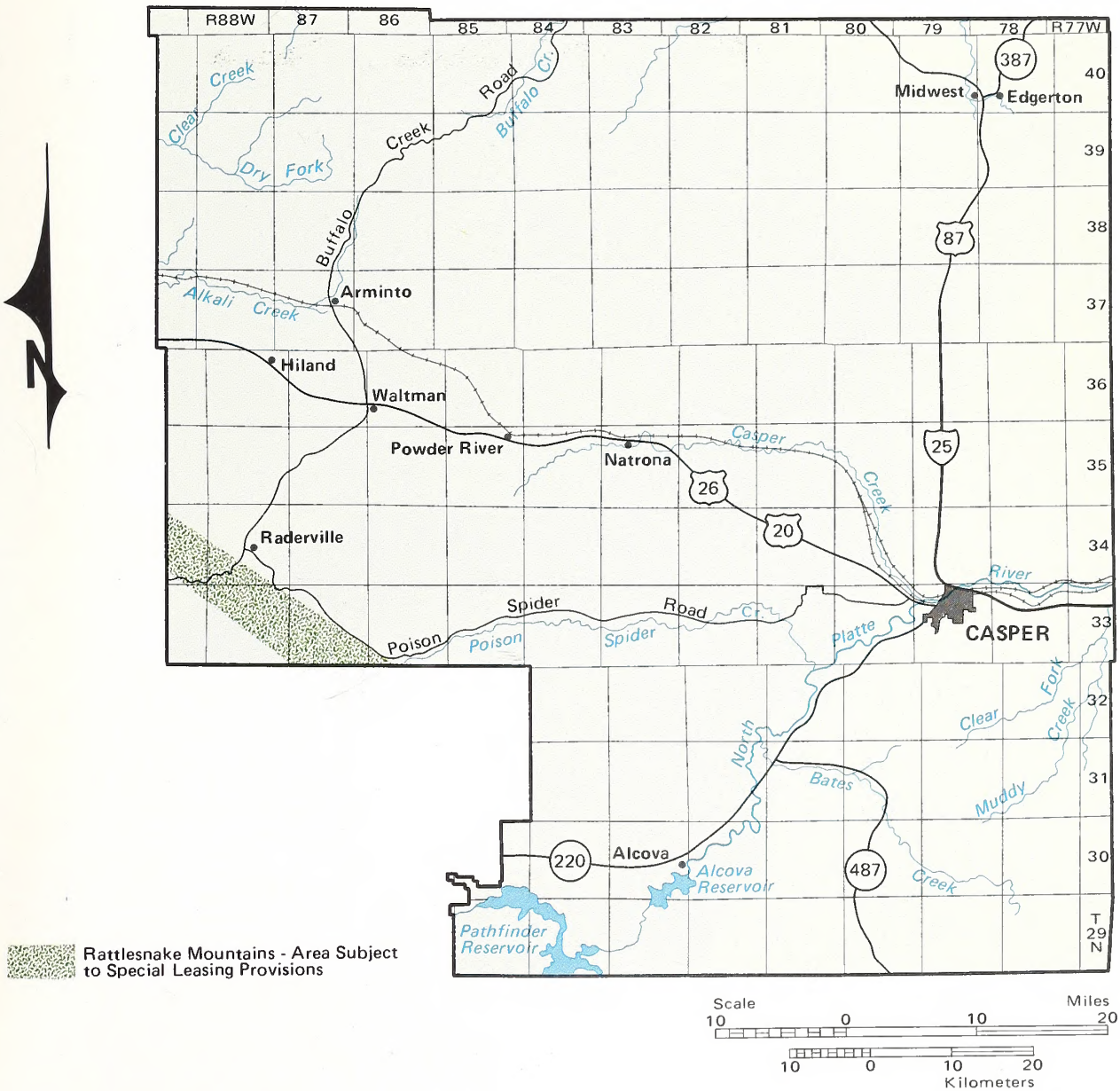
About 99% of the federal mineral estate in the planning area will be open to oil and gas leasing. Some areas will have restrictions or be closed to leasing to protect unique values. The restricted and closed areas are illustrated on Map 5. Specific decisions, listed below, should be reviewed for a description of the restriction and rationale. These decisions are described in the other sections of the brochure.

a. Decisions for areas with seasonal restrictions:
Wildlife decisions 4 and 6
Soil, Water, Air decision 2d

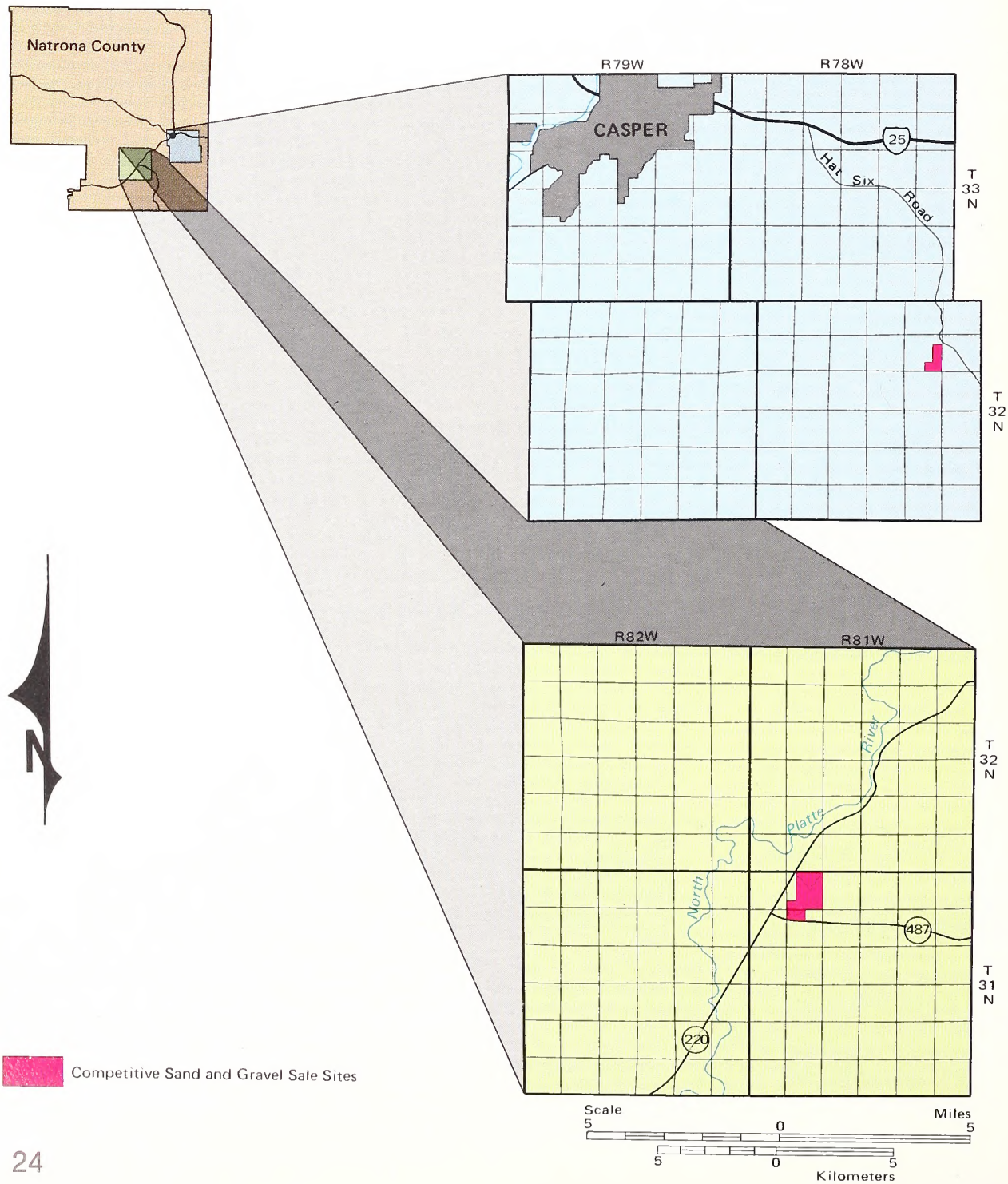
b. Decisions for areas with other restrictions:
Minerals decision 1
Lands decision 5
Soil, Water, Air decision 2c

c. Decisions for closed areas:
Recreation decision 1
Recreation decision 5

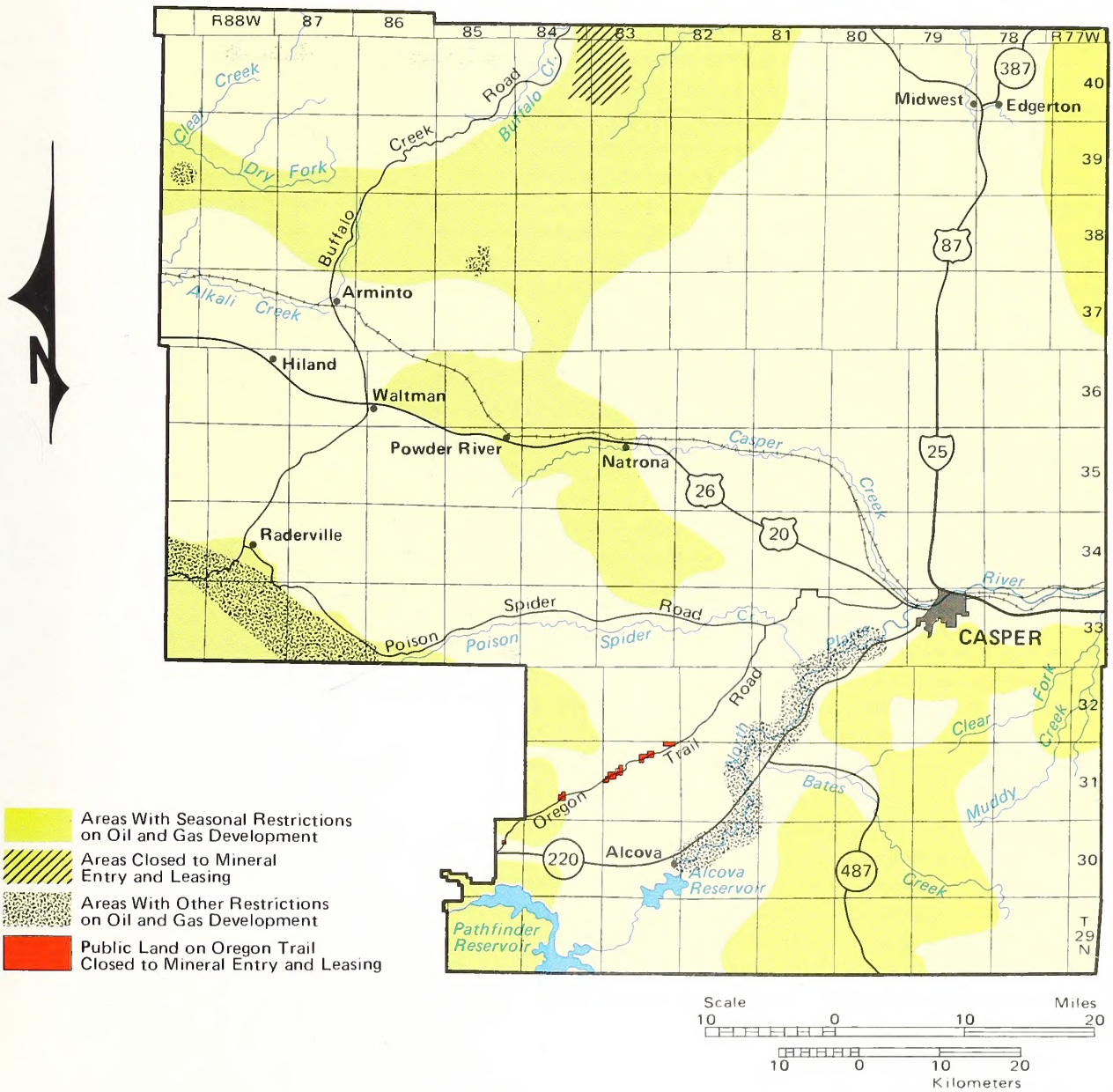
Map 8.
Oil and Gas Leasing in Rattlesnake Mountains



Map 9.
Sand and Gravel Sales



Map 10.
Summary of Restricted and Closed Areas—Oil and Gas Development



Rangeland Management

Program Description

The range management program deals with the inventory, evaluation and management of the vegetative resource on public lands. The program includes authorization and supervision of livestock grazing use, development and maintenance of livestock management facilities and protection of the range from weed infestation, pests and disease.

Livestock have grazed in the planning area for more than 100 years. The pioneers in the ranching industry were large ranching enterprises which were dependent on public lands for their livestock grazing. Many of these pioneers acquired ownership of the surface estate but not the mineral estate through the Stockraising Homestead Act of 1916. Other public land was too arid to make homestead entry possible. As a result, the federal government now administers 80% of the mineral estate and less than 40% of the surface estate in the planning unit.

Resource Description

The livestock forage on the public lands contributes to the economic stability of 128 ranch operations in Natrona County. Public lands under lease produce approximately 141,000 animal unit months (AUM's) of forage annually. Average carrying capacity is 7.45 acres per AUM.

Range improvement projects such as water development and fencing are needed to properly manage these lands for domestic livestock grazing. Some leases can be used only during winter because snow is the only source of livestock water.

Range management problems include conflicts between livestock grazing and recreation use or mineral development, and the presence of wild and/or trespass horses.

Multiple Use Objective

Manage areas suitable for allotment management plans to increase livestock forage and improve both watershed and wildlife habitat. Maintain areas designated for custodial management in a satisfactory condition.

Sheep grazing along Red Wall

Multiple Use Decisions

1. Range Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)

Prepare for the range EIS to be written in 1984 through the following interim actions:

- **—Update the case file**
- **—Map and record all pasture fences**
- **—Establish allotments for each lessee**
- **—Compile acreages and animal unit months by pasture**
- **—Set kind and numbers of livestock and seasons of use by allotment**

Rationale: BLM is compelled by existing laws, regulations and policy guidance to complete an EIS for the Natrona Planning Unit by 1984. Until that time, no intensive range management actions can be initiated on public land adminstered by BLM. These actions will facilitate EIS preparation.

2. Grazing Allotments (see Map 11)

Designate management allotments and obtain soils, vegetation, and actual use data. Establish trend plots in each pasture. On other lands leased for grazing establish a three-year inspection schedule and issue ten-year leases unless an area is (a) pending disposal, (b) overgrazed, (c) under conflicting lease applications, or (d) where livestock trespass occurs.

Rationale: Historically, funding has been insufficient to administer all public lands at the same level. Future intensive management efforts will be aimed at those areas where BLM can control livestock grazing. At the same time, BLM will attempt to detect and change harmful grazing practices on custodial allotments.

3. Deer Creek Horses (see Map 11)

In cooperation with the Forest Service and private landowners, gather all horses in the Deer Creek Area and make determinations of whether they are wild or trespass animals.

Unauthorized horses will be returned to their owners, after trespass settlements are made, or sold by the BLM to recover trespass obligations. Horses determined to be wild will be transferred to BLM's facilities in Rock Springs for adoption. This action will be completed within the next two years.

Rationale: Private landowners have requested that federal agencies remove the horses although less than 10% of the land is publicly owned. The Wyoming Game and Fish Department supports this decision because of loss of deer and elk habitat. A recent legal opinion obtained by BLM indicates these animals must be handled under the Wild Horse and Burro Protection Act, even though the Deer Creek area has a low percentage of public land and many of the horses are probably claimed by local ranchers.

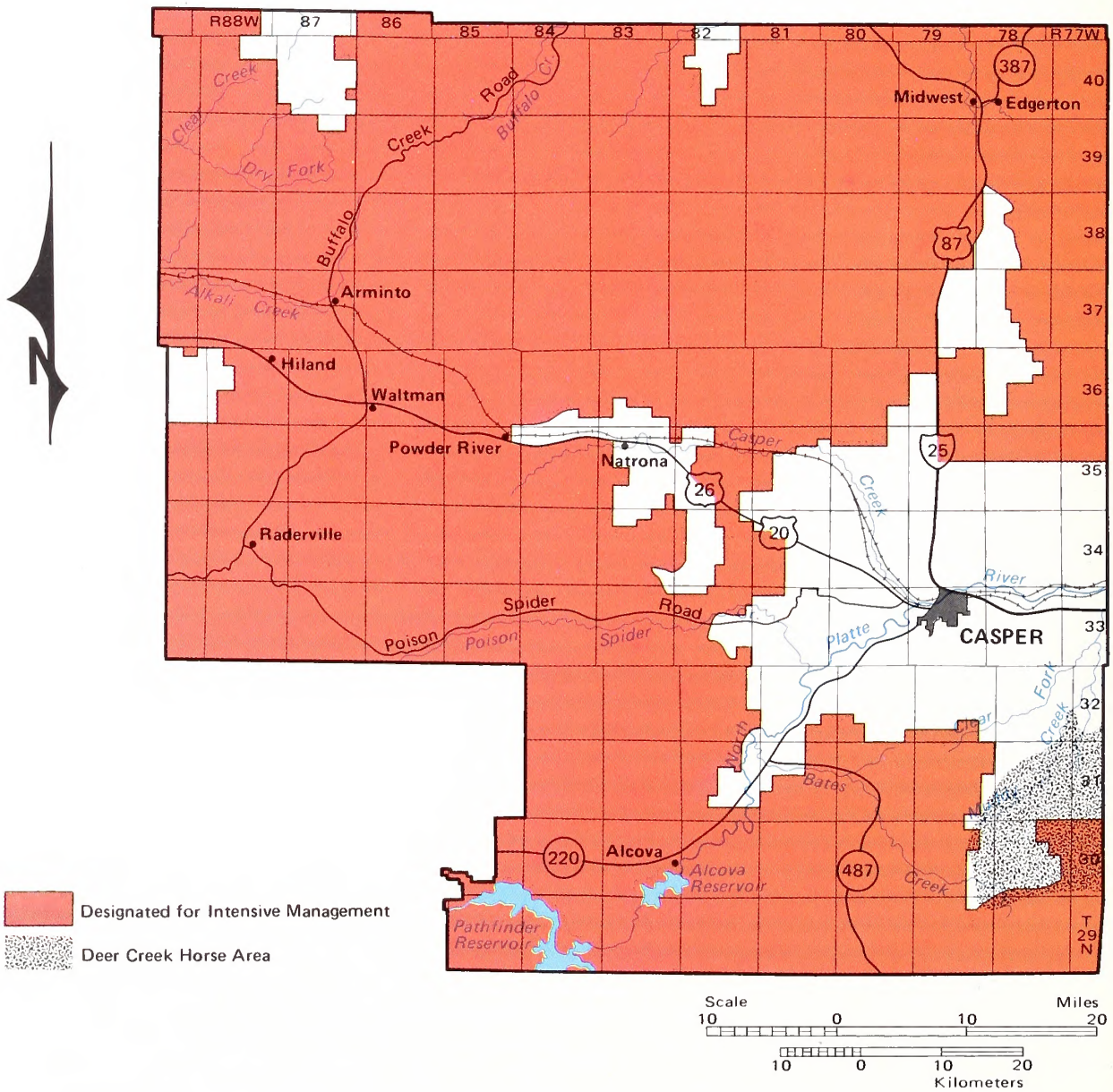
4. Water

Water in reservoirs on public lands will be reserved for use by livestock and wildlife.

Rationale: During the past two years BLM has received requests from minerals exploration companies to use water from reservoirs on public lands for exploration purposes. In a few cases, unauthorized use of water has occurred. However, in most cases BLM does not allow exploration companies to remove water from its stockwater reservoirs and normally the state engineer approves this restriction.

Water is a precious commodity in this area and maintenance of dependable sources for livestock and wildlife is extremely important. Without water, large areas of range could not be used by these animals.

Map 11.
Grazing Allotments and Deer Creek Horse Area

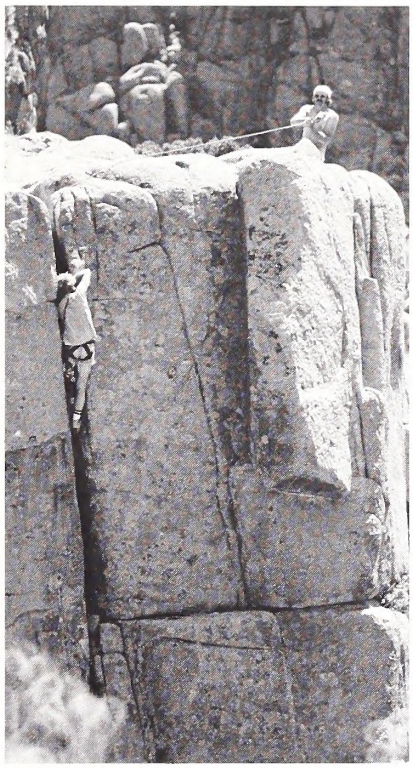


Recreation

Program Description

In outdoor recreation there are two basic management components: the visitor (his behavior, motivations and perceptions) and the resource (its potential and limitations for recreation). BLM carries the responsibility of managing the two components to harmoniously meet the needs of the visitor while protecting the resource. Presently the recreation program directs its efforts to hunting, fishing, camping and protection of cultural and visual resources.

Within Natrona County, the following activities are taking place under the outdoor recreation program: protection of visual resources through rehabilitation measures on surface disturbance activities, protection of National Register and other significant cultural sites, cooperative programs with the Wyoming Game and Fish Department and private landowners to increase recreational opportunities on public land, gaining access to recreation areas and providing interpretive facilities for visitor education and enjoyment.



Rock climbers in Fremont Canyon

Resource Description

Important recreation areas on or adjacent to public land within the planning unit include the southern Bighorns, Muddy Mountain, the North Platte River and its impoundments, Goldeneye Reservoir and historic sites along the Oregon Trail.

Population growth in Natrona County is leading to increased use of existing recreation areas and demand for new areas. Much of the demand for new areas will be met on public lands.

Multiple Use Objective

Protect the scenic, cultural and wildlife values on public land in Natrona County while maintaining traditional multiple uses including mineral exploration and development. Also, provide a quality experience for the recreationist who seeks a natural setting.

Proposed Decisions

1. Red Wall (see Map 12)

Identify the Red Wall as an area of critical environmental concern. Nominate appropriate parcels to the National Register of Natural Landmarks. Consider closing federal mineral estate in the northern portion to mineral entry and leasing, but only after appropriate mineral inventories have been conducted.

Rationale: The Red Wall is a prominent escarpment of the Chugwater Formation. Its size, color and lack of man-made intrusions make it a high quality visual resource. Cultural resource sites and wildlife habitat (raptor nesting, in particular) also exist in the Red Wall area.

Public interest in preservation of the Red Wall is high. Rock collectors, historical interest groups and members of the general public have asked about BLM's management decisions for this landmark.

2. Fremont Canyon (see Map 13)

Prepare a recreation management plan (RMP) for Fremont Canyon.

Rationale: The need for an RMP for Fremont Canyon has been apparent since 1961. An RMP would set the stage for orderly development of the area, would identify natural hazards and suggest measures for protection of the public and would suggest a comprehensive program to meet the anticipated increase in recreation demand.

3. North Platte River (see Map 13)

Prepare an RMP for the North Platte River by September 30, 1981. This plan will address future management at existing landing/launching sites which comprise the "Trappers' Route" and the Bessemer Bend historic sites.

Rationale: Water-based recreation use in the Casper District is expected to increase more than any other recreation use by 1990. Boating and canoeing are expected to increase 47% by 1990, according to the Wyoming State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan. If management of river use is not systematically planned, the river and recreation sites along it may suffer irreparable harm. Benefits of a comprehensive RMP would include improved public understanding and a reduction in landowner-recreationists conflict.

4. Vehicle Travel Restrictions (see map 13.)

A. Motor vehicle travel on public lands will be limited to designated roads and trails on seven areas:

- **Muddy Mountain**
- **Goldeneye Wildlife and Recreation Area**
- **Casper Sand Dunes**
- **Platte River Canoe Trail Tracts**
- **Jackson Canyon**
- **Red Wall**
- **Oregon Trail**

Rationale: Vehicle travel on Muddy Mountain has been restricted for several years to reduce disturbance to the elk herd and to protect fragile resources suitable for environmental education. Existing off-road travel restrictions will continue in effect.

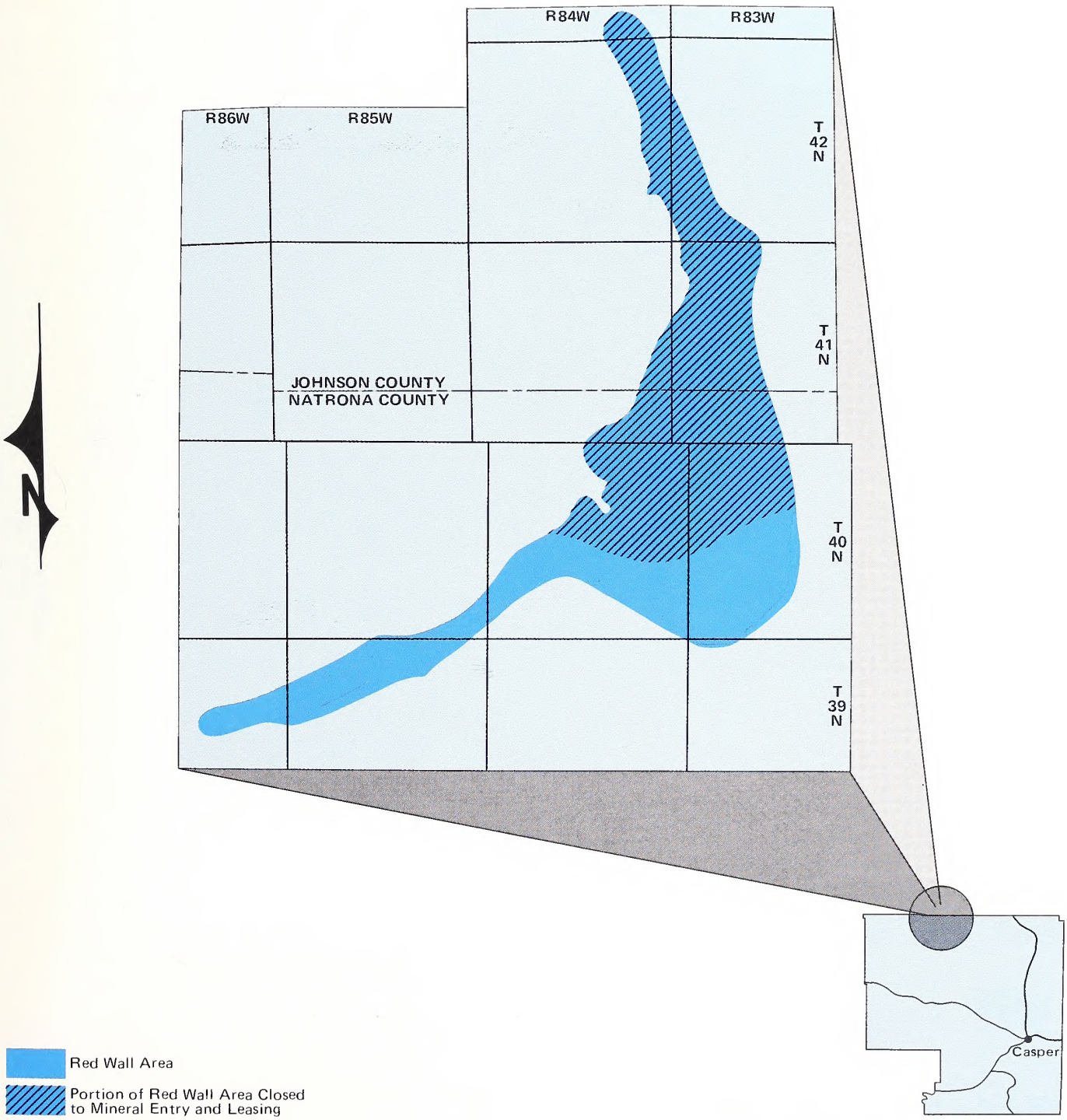
A recreation plan was developed for the Goldeneye Wildlife and Recreation Area in 1977 which included vehicle travel restrictions. The decision continues these restrictions.

There is presently no legal public access to the Sand Dunes area. Off-road travel must be limited to prevent accelerated wind erosion in the dune field.

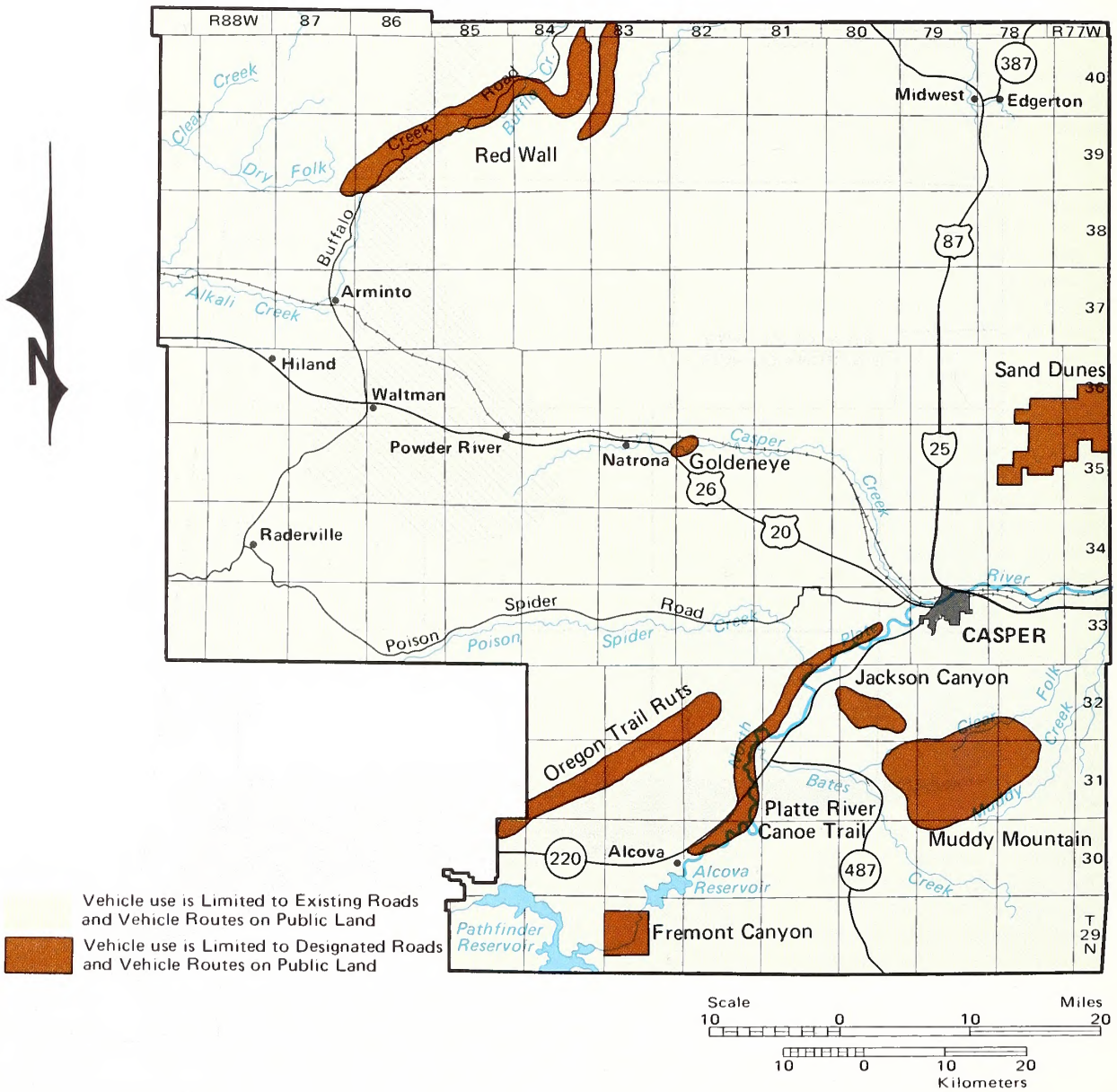
Tracts of public land along the Platte River between Alcova

Platte River

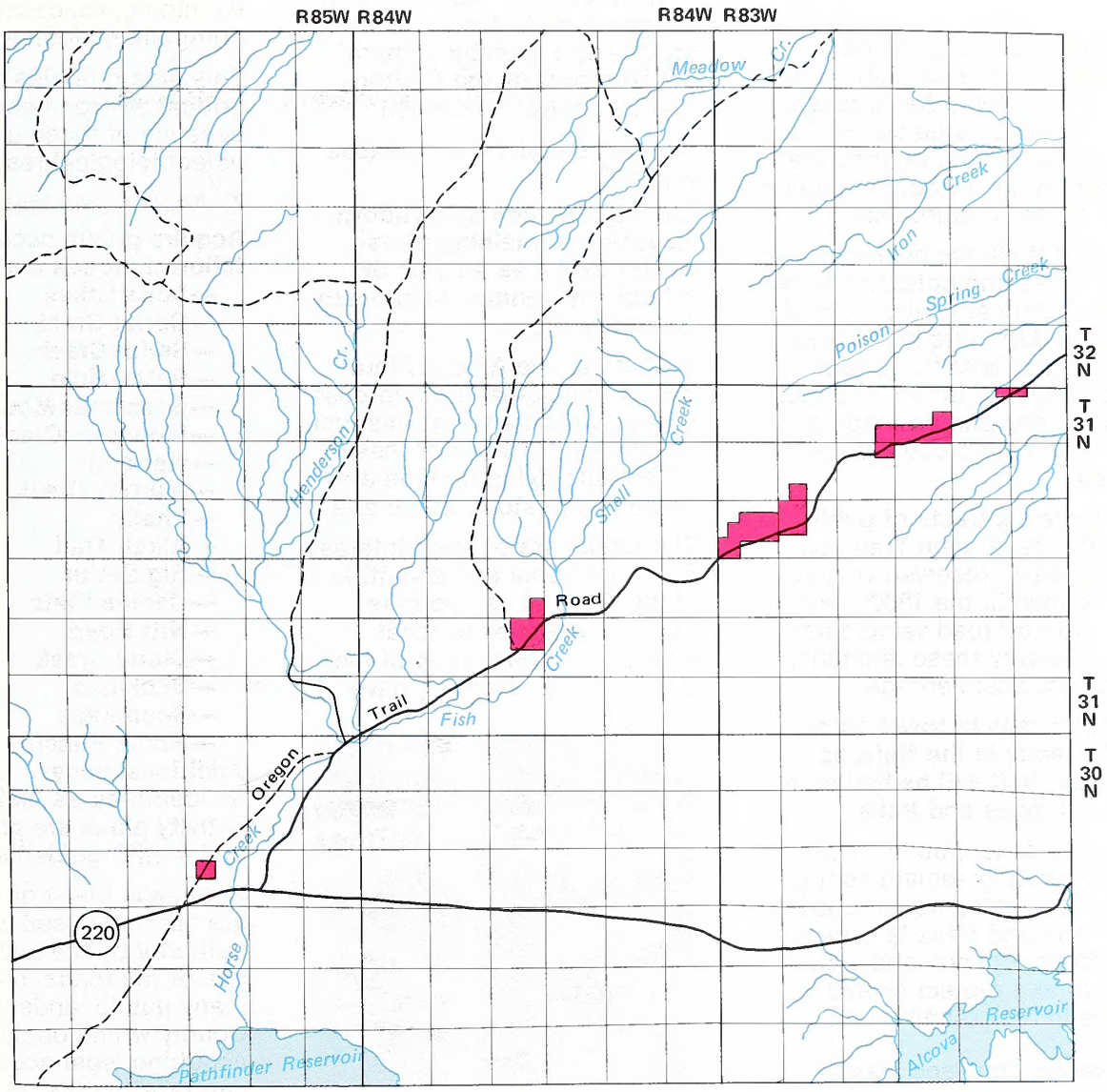
Map 12.
Red Wall Area



Map 13.
Off-Road Vehicle Designations for Natrona County



Map 14.
Oregon Trail



Segments of Oregon Trail to be Withdrawn from Mineral Entry

and Casper are heavily used for boat launching and landing sites. Limitations are essential to minimize the impacts of heavy use.

Jackson Canyon provides a critical roosting area for golden and bald eagles. Because the area is near a large concentration of people, limitations are necessary to protect the eagles from human disturbance.

The Red Wall has been identified as having potential as an Area of Critical Environmental concern due to its high visual cultural and wildlife values. Restrictions of off-road vehicle travel to designated roads and trails will help protect these values.

There are six tracts of public land on the Oregon Trail containing well preserved wagon ruts formed in the 1800's. Indiscriminate off-road vehicle use could destroy these remnants of our national heritage.

B. Motor vehicle travel on other public lands in the Natrona Planning Unit will be limited to existing roads and trails.

Travel on other public lands will essentially remain as it is today. Confining travel to existing roads and trails is necessary to control soil and water erosion and protect scenic values in the planning unit.

5. Oregon Trail (see Map 14)

Withdraw from mineral entry, segments of the Oregon Trail where field examination proves that wagon ruts are still intact. The segments should include all forty-acre subdivisions with existing evidence of the trail.

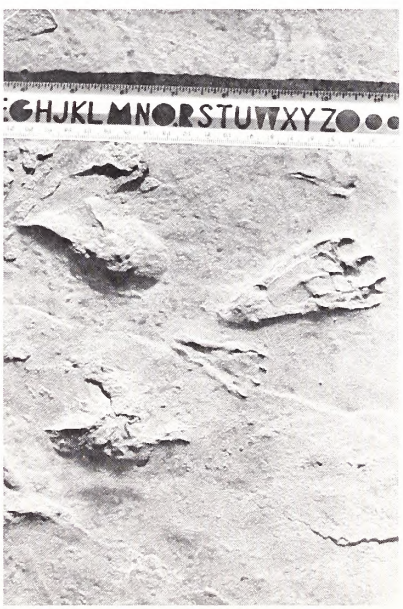
Rationale: Without a protective withdrawal from mineral entry, the development of locatable minerals could destroy this significant cultural resource. (The Oregon Trail is protected from salable and leasable mineral development by the environmental analysis process.)

6. Pteradactyl Track Site (see Map 15)

Identify the area near Alcova Reservoir containing pteradactyl tracks as an area of critical environmental concern (see Map 10).

Rationale: The Alcova Pteradactyl track area is the largest of four known sites of this type in the world. Tracks of these prehistoric flying reptiles are preserved in stone at the site.

The tracks are of great interest for educational and scientific study. Special use permits have been issued to local schools and personnel of the University of Wyoming have collected specimens of the tracks for preservation in their museum.



Pterodactyl tracks

The tracks could be destroyed by mining, vandalism or indiscriminate collecting.

This area qualifies as one of critical environmental concern because of these unique paleontological resources.

7. Access (see Map 16)

Acquire public access on the following roads and trails:

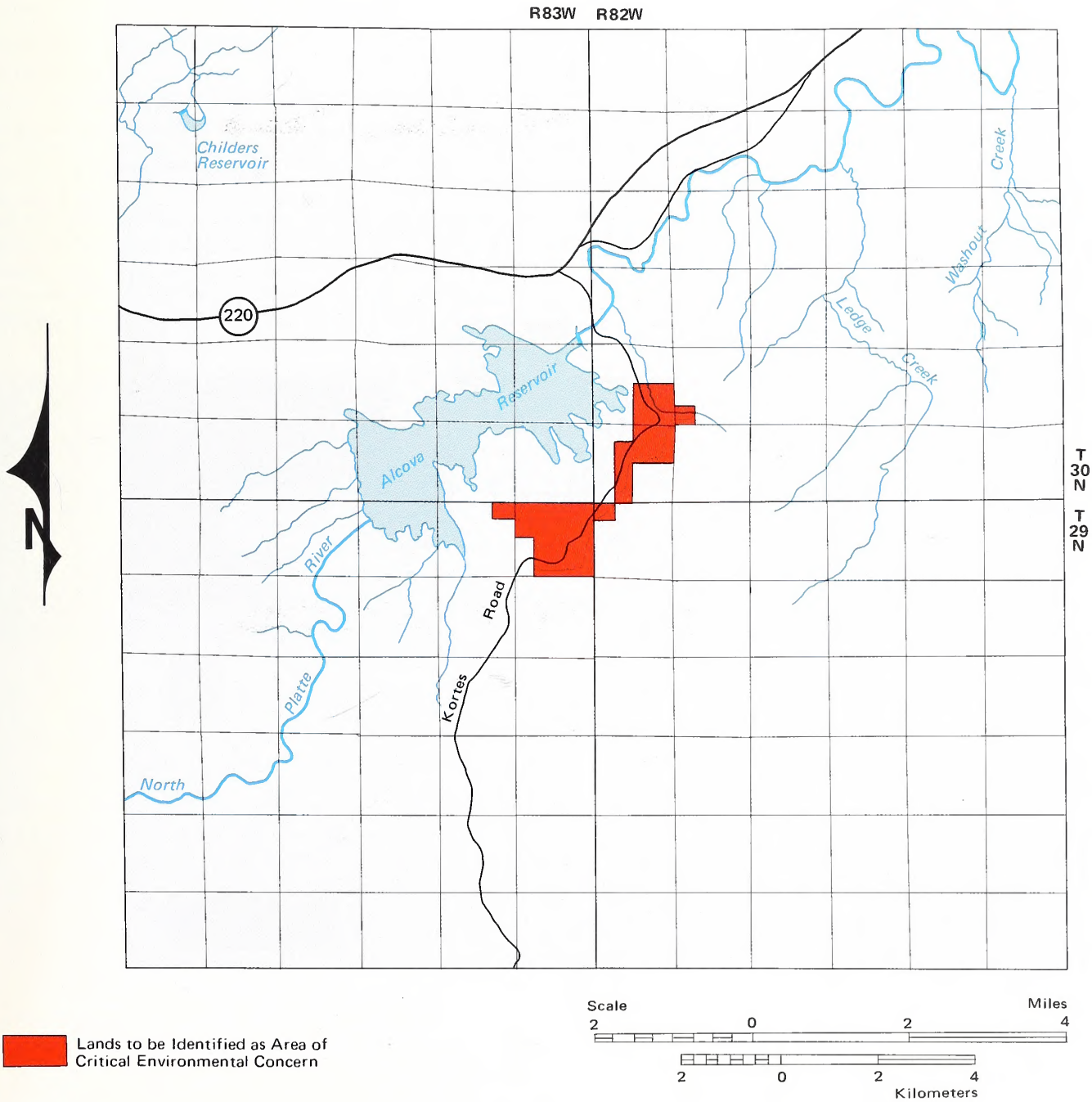
- **—Soda Lakes**
- **—Corral Creek**
- **—Smith Creek**
- **—Bates Hole**
- **—Bessemer Mountain**
- **—Mountain Creek**
- **—Natrona**
- **—Murphy Creek**
- **—Shelly**
- **—Alkali Trail**
- **—Big Sulfur**
- **—Cactus Flats**
- **—Nitt Road**
- **—Cloud Creek**
- **—Bucknum**
- **—Snodgrass**
- **—Horse Ranch**

Additional access needs will be identified as individual activity plans are prepared under MFP guidelines.

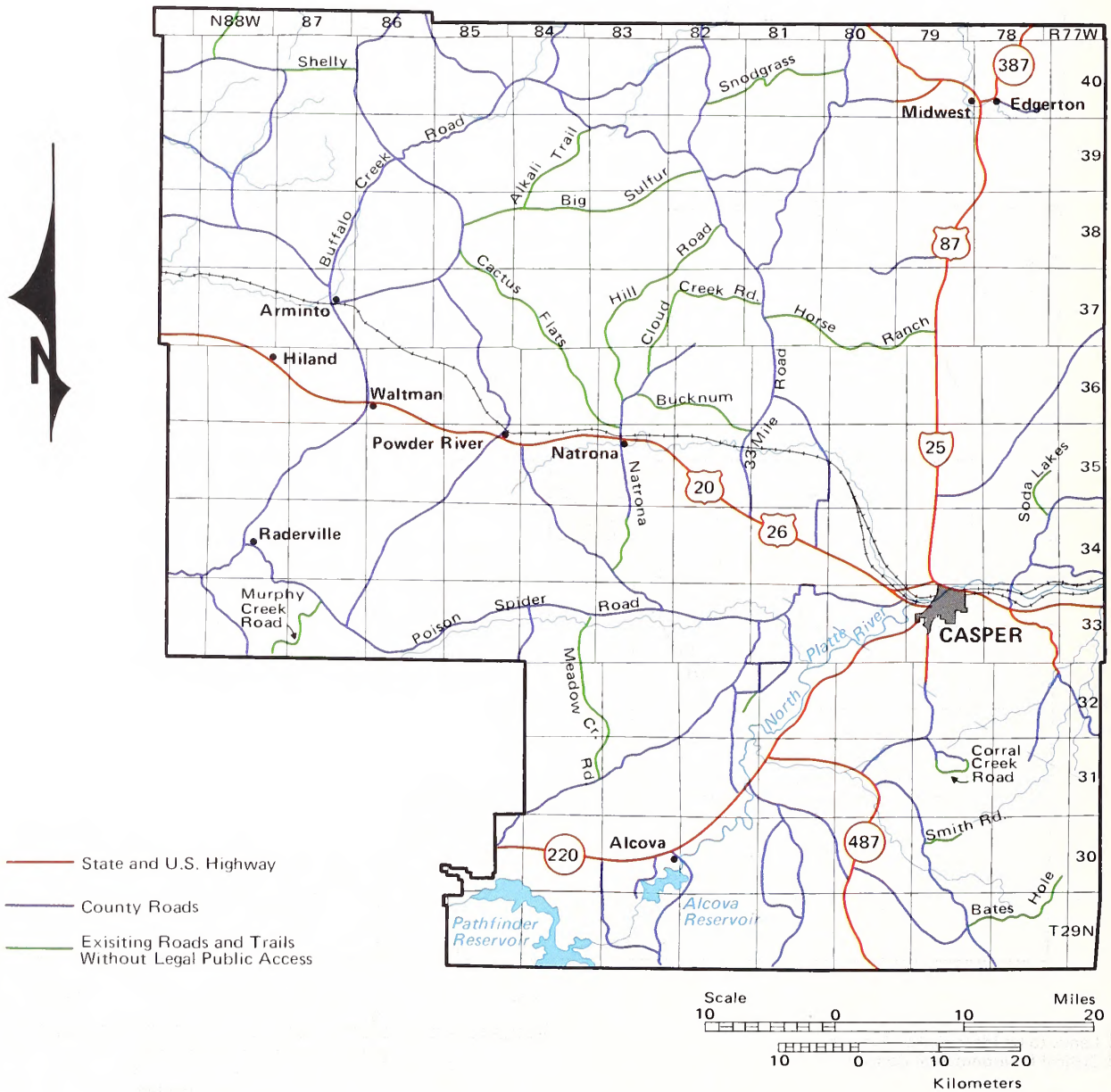
Rationale: Many of these roads are currently used without legal authority by the public. Without use of the roads, recreation on many public lands in Natrona County would be curtailed. By acquiring legal access, BLM can take the first step toward active management of recreation use on public lands.

In addition to public needs, the BLM requires legal access to manage lands and resources under its jurisdiction.

Map 15.
Pteradactyl Paleontological Site



Map 16.
Public Access



Wildlife

Program Description

The public lands provide a wide variety of important habitat for both terrestrial and aquatic wildlife.

The main objective of the wildlife program is the protection of habitat on public as well as private surface. Whenever a federal action is involved, BLM works closely with the Wyoming Game and Fish Department and other agencies on wildlife and fisheries habitat management.

Resource Description

The planning unit includes a variety of habitats with a diverse wildlife population. These habitats range from grassland to sagebrush to coniferous forests. Species occurring in the area include elk, mule and white-tailed deer, antelope, sage grouse, wild turkey, waterfowl, raptors and the endangered bald eagle and black-footed ferret.

The importance of both aquatic and terrestrial habitat is increasing because of population growth within the planning unit and the resulting demands for recreation, residential and industrial areas.

Multiple Use Objective

Maintain existing wildlife habitat through development of habitat management plans and reduce adverse impacts on wildlife habitat resulting from multiple-use activities.

Ducks in a pond near Poison Spider

Multiple Use Decisions

1. Bald Eagle Habitat Management Plan (see Map 17)

Develop by September 30, 1981, a habitat management plan (HMP) for BLM-controlled bald eagle habitat on Pine Mountain, in Jackson and Little Red Canyons and along the North Platte River.

Rationale: A definitive plan is needed to assess the requirements of bald eagles in the planning unit and to manage habitat for those requirements. The HMP is BLM's primary means of addressing this need.

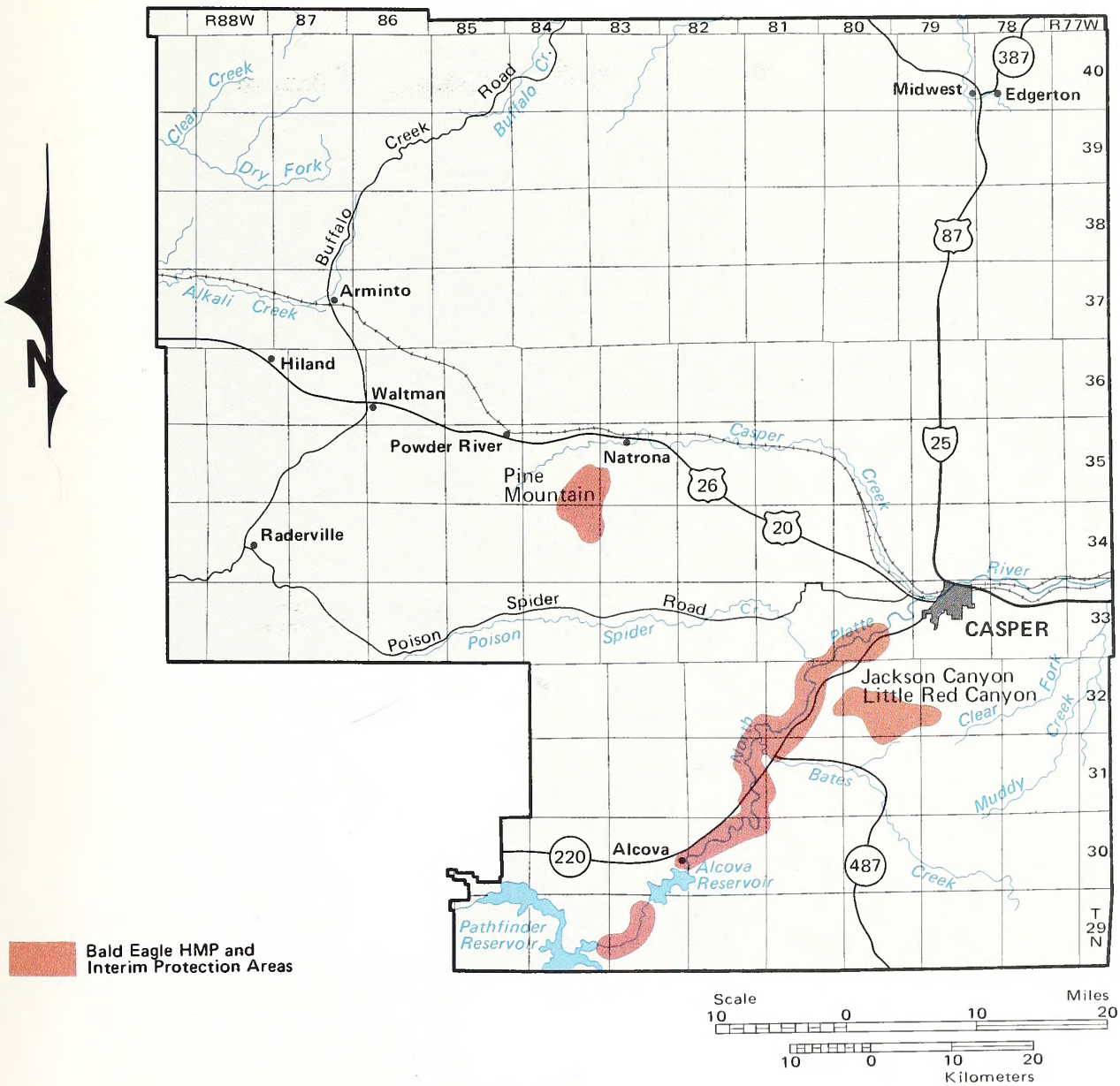
2. Bald Eagle Interim Protection

Until the HMP is completed, provide interim protection for present populations of bald eagles on Pine Mountain, in Jackson and Little Red Canyons and along the North Platte River. Protective measures should include:

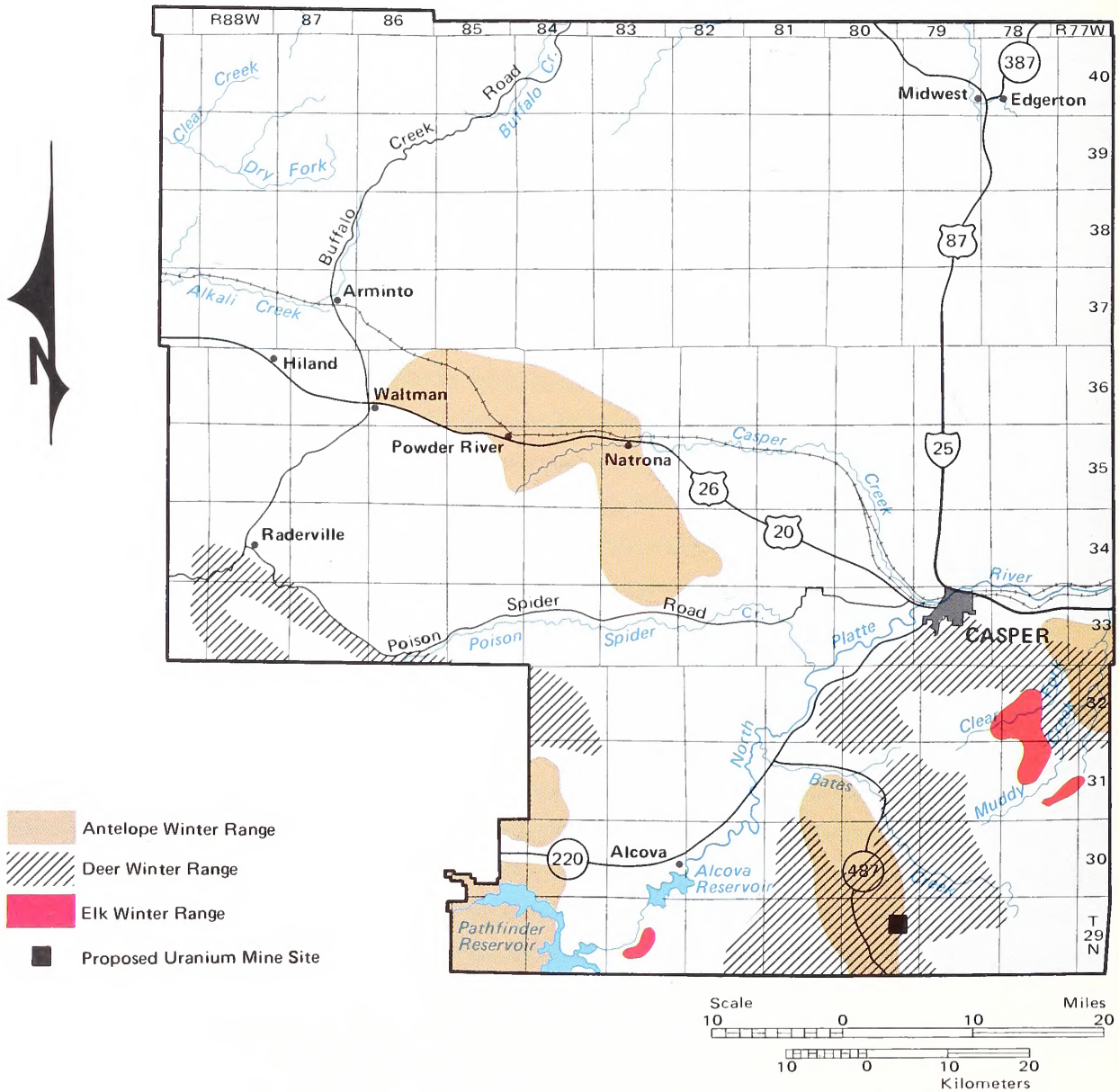
- **—Protection of the trees (except as noted below)**
- **—Prohibition of improvement of roads or legal access or their proliferation**
- **—There will be no tree cutting for fire suppression or control of pine beetle infestations in Jackson and Little Red Canyons and on Pine Mountain**

Rationale: Bald eagles winter in the planning unit. They are easily disturbed while feeding and roosting and will abandon areas where they are disturbed repeatedly. Trees are an essential part of eagle habitat. Winter recreation use is currently limited by poor access and road conditions. Disturbance from recreation use will be partially controlled by not improving access.

Map 17.
Bald Eagle Habitat Management Areas



Map 18.
Big Game Habitat Management Areas



3. Antelope Migration (see Map 18)

Throughout antelope winter range, convert approximately 80 miles of fence to four-strand wire or install an adequate number of antelope passes or cattleguards to ensure antelope movement.

Rationale: Net-wire fences and other fences with extremely low bottom wires or high top wires inhibit antelope movements. Antelope do adapt to some degree, but during severe winters are in weakened condition and less able to negotiate these fences.

All fences constructed on public lands since the regulations for fencing antelope range were promulgated are in compliance. Many older fences have never been modified and are in violation of the regulations.

4. Seasonal Restriction in Winter Range (see Map 18)

Prohibit oil and gas exploration, right-of-way construction and range improvement construction in deer and antelope winter range from November 1 through April 30.

Rationale: Winter is the critical season for big game. The animals are concentrated in small areas and may not be able to avoid disturbance due to their weakened condition or to snowdrifts and fences.

5. Lawn Creek Big Game Winter Range (see Map 18)

Protect the critical big game winter range in the Lawn Creek area by requiring the following mitigating measures in the mining plan for the American Nuclear Uranium mine. All travel associated with the mining operation, including ore hauling and transportation of equipment and personnel, will be restricted to the road along Lawn Creek.

Rationale: The road along Lawn Creek to the Medicine Bow Highway is the shortest route to an established roadway and provides a gentle grade. Restriction of travel to this road will minimize habitat disturbance and help prevent harassment of wintering deer.

6. Elk Winter Range (see Map 18)

Manage public lands in elk winter range for the protection of elk, placing the following limitation on other uses:

- **—No land disposal actions**
- **—No right-of-way construction or maintenance from November 1 through April 30**
- **—limit winter recreational use by not improving winter access**

Rationale: Winter range is crucial to survival of elk. Often the entire herd is confined on a small area for several months. Escape or avoidance of disturbance is difficult due to snow cover.

Antelope

Jackson Canyon

7. Jackson Canyon (See Map 17)

Identify Jackson Canyon as an area of critical environmental concern

Rationale: Jackson Canyon provides an essential night roosting area for the bald eagle, an endangered species. About 60 bald eagles per day roost in Jackson canyon from December through March. Because the area is close to a large population center, special measures must be taken to protect the eagles from human disturbance.

Soil, Water, Air

Program Description

Soil, water and air management requires management of other land use activities to maintain the quality of these resources. Watershed management has to consider the interrelationships of soil, vegetation and water and how these resources are affected by various land uses. Management of watershed involves prescribing a specific land use, non-use or modification of vegetative cover for improvement, maintenance or protection of watershed quality.

Resource Description

The erosion condition and trend was inventoried on 22 watersheds within the planning area. The erosion trend seems to be deteriorating. Many factors affect the condition and trend of watershed areas: type and degree of land use, soils, vegetation, precipitation and topography.

Land use is the main controllable factor affecting watershed conditions and trends.

Energy mineral exploration and development are the most noticeable forms of surface disturbance in the planning unit.

There are methods to lessen watershed deterioration and still allow land use activities. These methods include: intensive livestock management, protective stipulations and sound reclamation practices on surface disturbances and intensive management of areas with severe erosion susceptibility.

Multiple Use Objectives

Manage watershed for stabilization of soil resources, maintenance and restoration of soil productivity, enhancement of water yield and quality and reduction of flood sediment damage. Reduce impacts to watershed values through stipulations in authorizations of other resource activities.

Fremont Canyon

Multiple Use Decisions

1. Salt Creek Drainage (see Map 19)

Identify the Salt Creek drainage as an area of critical environmental concern (ACEC).

Rationale: Areas of critical environmental concern were addressed in the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976. They include areas within the public lands where special management attention is required to protect and prevent irreparable damage to important historic, cultural or scenic values, fish and wildlife resources or other natural systems or processes, or to protect life and safety from natural hazards. Regulations for designation of such areas are pending. This proposal will be subject to the final regulations.

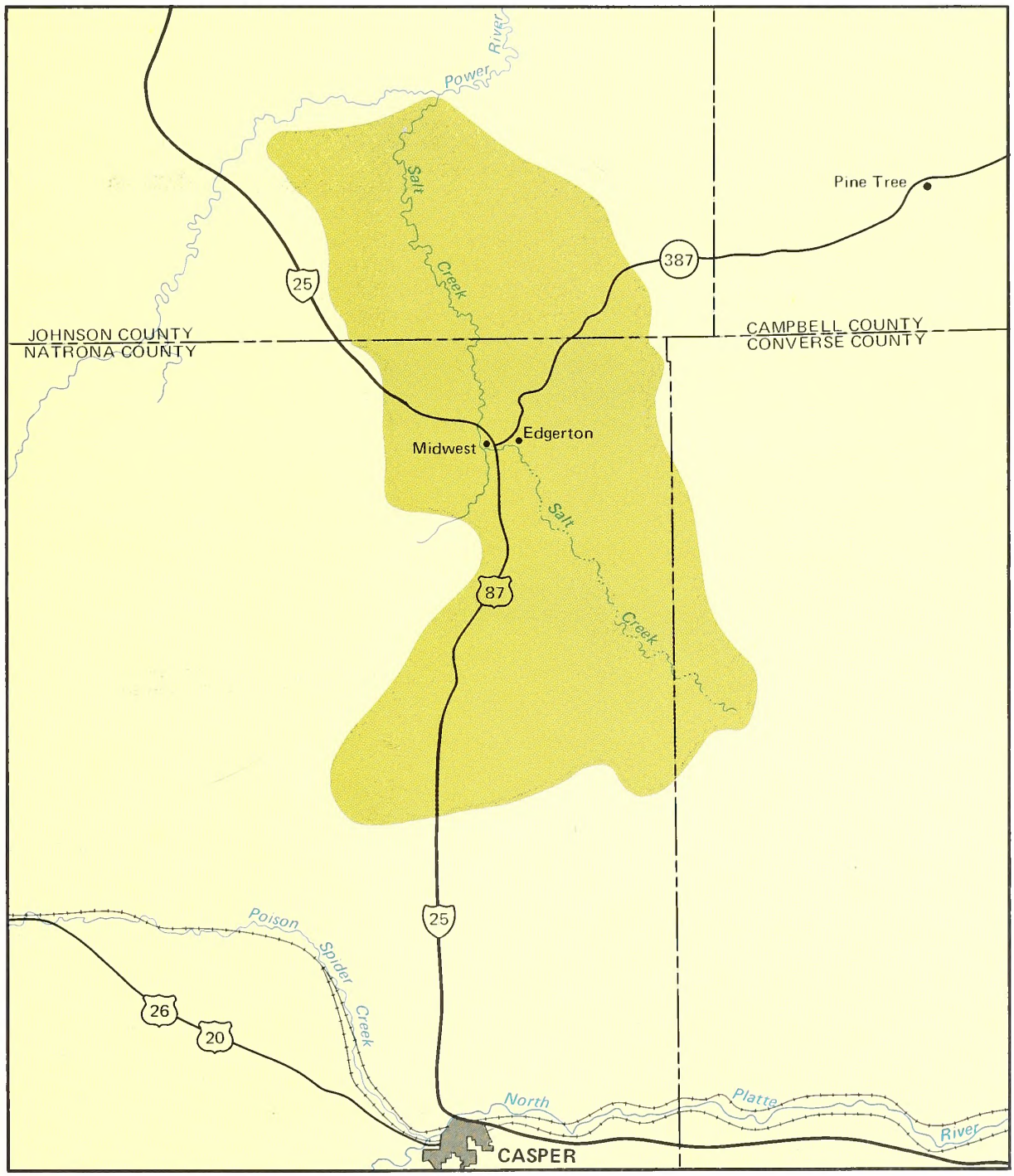
Oil fields in the Salt Creek drainage are extensive and old. Hazards associated with the Salt Creek, Teapot Dome and East Teapot fields include circulating wells, boggy areas, areas covered by oil and tar, contaminated water and piles of oil field debris.

Midwest as seen from Salt Creek Oil Field

This is not an area that would normally attract people. However, there are two towns within the area and numerous businesses. Contacts with the mayors and town councils indicate the population of the communities could increase by 3,000 before 1984 due to uranium and coal development. New residents of these communities may not understand the hazards of old oil fields and could be vulnerable to accidents.

The potential for serious water quality degradation currently exists in the Salt Creek drainage, primarily because of the presence of the oil fields.

Map 19.
Salt Creek Drainage—Area of Critical Environmental Concern



2. Oil and Gas Stipulations (see Map 20)

In order to mitigate surface disturbance, enforce the following stipulations for oil and gas exploration and development.

a. Require native seed mixtures with demonstrated success for use in rehabilitation.

b. Rehabilitation for temporary access roads and drill pads will be done according to surface operating standards developed by the Wyoming State Office of BLM. (These standards are described in a BLM Brochure *Oil and Gas,* publication number PB 110 (1979), available from all BLM offices in the state.

c. No surface occupancy will be permitted under these conditions:

- —on slopes greater than 25%
- —within 1,320 feet of the North Platte River
- —within 500 feet of streams, reservoirs and channels
- —within 200 feet of identified intermittent or ephemeral drainages
- —on Cedar Ridge

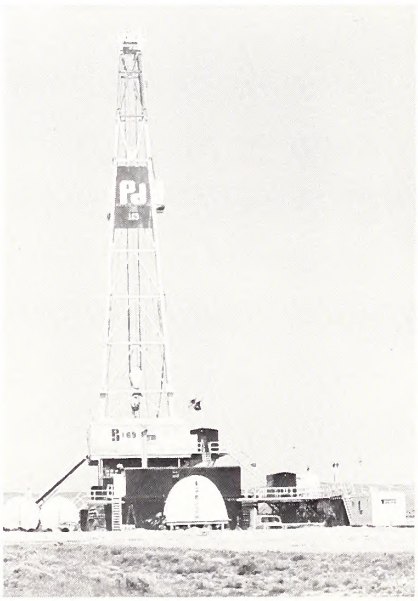
d. In order to minimize watershed damage, exploration, drilling and other development activity will be allowed only during the period from April 1 to November 30 in the following areas.

- —South Fork Powder River Drainage
- —Coal Mountain-Twin Buttes
- —Pine Mountain
- —Rattlesnake Mountains
- —Holliday Draw
- —Badwater-Deadman Butte
- —Pine Ridge
- —Bear Peak

and from June to November 30 on Muddy Mountain

e. No-surface-occupancy or no-leasing conditions will be applied to areas where surface resources are determined to be more valuable than mineral resources. (It has already been determined that no leasing will be permitted on some parcels in the unit, legal descriptions of which are on file in the Casper District Office.)

Rationale: The proposed no-surface occupancy areas are small and have been designated to protect resources such as the North Platte River, Goldeneye Wildlife and Recreation Area, the Muddy Mountain Environmental Education Area, Red Wall and small areas of highly erodible soils.



Drilling rig

With 58 oil fields and an estimated 650 producing wells in Natrona County, oil and gas exploration and production has one of the greatest adverse impacts on watershed of any resource management activity.

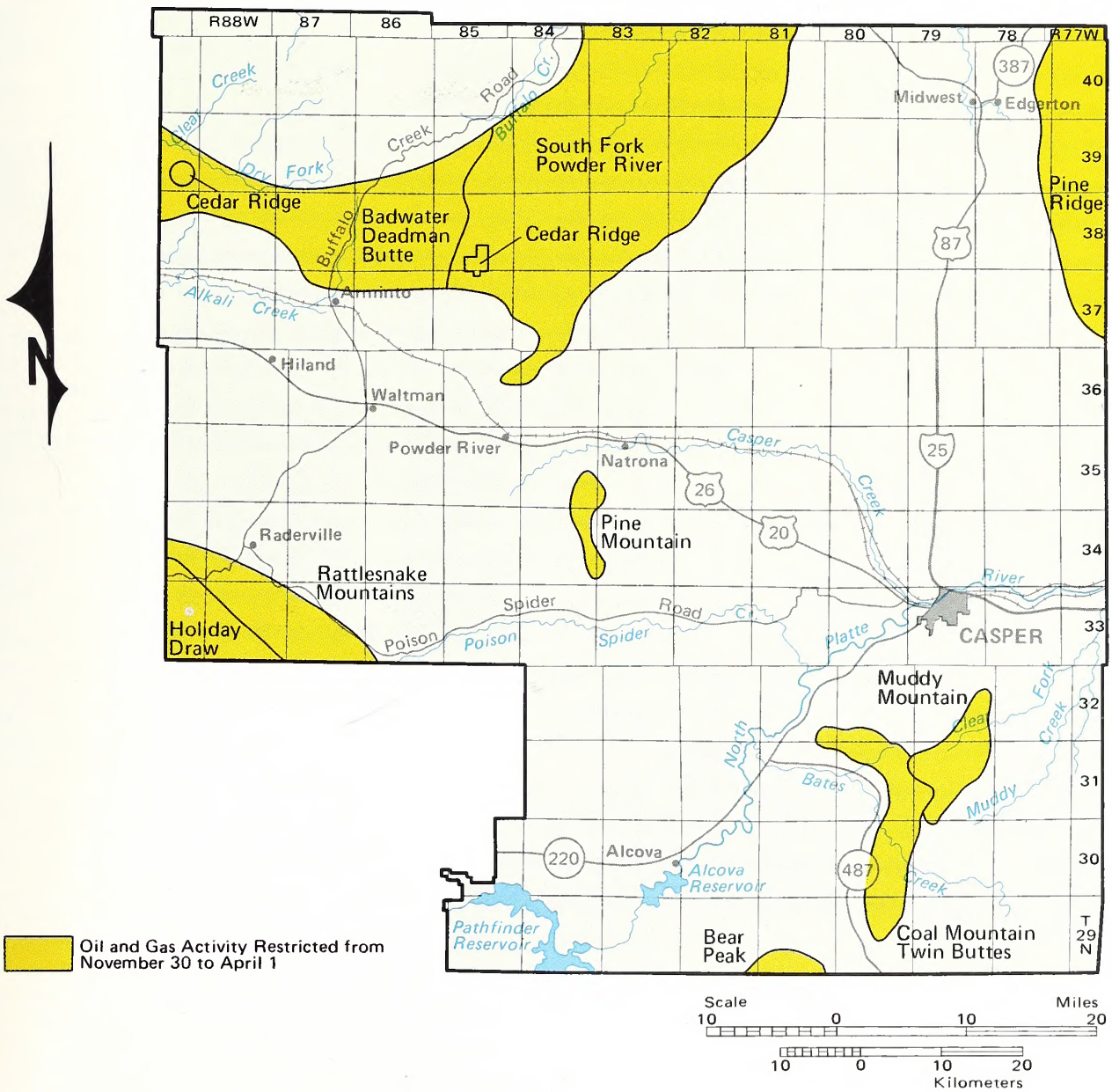
Oil and gas production on public lands in Natrona County generates $82 million annually. This is approximately 71% of total oil and gas revenues in the county. Petroleum production is by far the most significant mineral revenue source in Natrona County.

BLM is aware of the significance of the oil and gas industry, particularly in light of foreign oil price increases and the looming national oil shortage. Since 1976, over 300,000 acres of public land within the Platte River Resource Area have been returned to oil and gas leasing status. The recommendation for oil and gas leasing in the Rattlesnake Mountains brings the total to 420,000 acres in just over three years.

The total effect of this action on oil and gas lease management is yet to be realized. Extremely rough topographic areas, crucial game winter range, valuable recreation lands, relatively unspoiled streams and valuable grazing lands are coming under scrutiny for oil and gas exploration.

The oil and gas industry and BLM are responsible for what happens to these lands. These protective stipulations will help meet this obligation.

Map 20.
Oil and Gas Development



CUMULATIVE ENVIRONMENTAL OVERVIEW

Lands

The community oriented lands decisions are all designed to aid cities in accommodating orderly growth needs. Consolidation of public lands through exchanges will permit better resource management. Protective withdrawals and classification of lands suitable for agricultural or mineral development are ways to control use of the resources while serving public interest. The corridor decision will discourage the proliferation of transportation and utility rights-of-way throughout the area.

Minerals

The oil field rehabilitation plan decision will enable BLM to better manage public lands where oil and gas has been developed and will minimize adverse impacts. The mineral materials decision will enhance orderly use of the mineral construction materials. The decision about special management areas will provide a high level of management in critical areas and protect historical values, while returning 420,000 acres to oil and gas leasing.

Road leading to Muddy Mountain

Range

Range decisions will maximize use of forage on public lands and minimize environmental damage. Reservation of water and removal of horses from the Deer Creek area will favor wildlife and livestock needs.

Soil, Water and Air

Beneficial impacts expected to result from these decisions are decreases in soil erosion, maintenance of quality water and reduction of health hazards.

Wildlife

Wildlife decisions will assure protection and improvement of significant wildlife habitat such as big game winter ranges and raptor nesting area. Decisions specifically consider vegetative cover, potential surface or noise disturbance, critical water sources and management of livestock as it affects wildlife habitat. Some adverse impacts will be caused by restrictions of mineral development.

Recreation

The recreation decisions are aimed at preventing degradation of special values in the Sand Dunes, Muddy Mountain and Red Wall areas and along the North Platte River. Other decisions will protect historic and paleontological values.

INTERRELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER PLANS

A special effort was made to coordinate the plan with other federal, state and local government agencies.

Governmental entities consulted include the Forest Service, Soil Conservation Service, Geological Survey, Wyoming Game and Fish Department, Natrona County Commissioners and Natrona County Planners. Additional government entities are being contacted via this planning brochure.

Some of the decisions have significant on and off site implications affecting other agencies. Decisions to make public lands available for public purposes should benefit local governments in the planning unit. Livestock grazing decisions will affect agencies such as the Soil Conservation Service, Wyoming State Land Board and the Forest Service, who work with the same range users that BLM does. Range management practices affect wildlife populations which is of direct interest to the Wyoming Game and Fish Department. Existing procedures call for cooperative planning on range management by all agencies involved. Wildlife management decisions have been coordinated closely with the Wyoming Game and Fish Department to ensure that habitat management is consistent with objectives for each wildlife species. Using mineral materials for state, city and county use will benefit local government and allow them to develop long range road construction plans. These are just some of the coordination efforts which have taken place on the major issues.

ACTIONS AFTER THE LAND USE PLAN

This brochure discusses the proposed land use plan decisions for the Natrona Planning Unit. This plan will be followed by on-the-ground actions. These actions are subject to the requirements of the National Environmental Quality Act. An environmental assessment is prepared for each action whether it is initiated by BLM or others. If the impacts are unacceptable, the proposed action may be modified or rejected. Implementation of on-the-ground actions initiated by BLM is contingent upon the necessary funding by Congress. It may be some time before some of these decisions are implemented.

Any major changes in this plan will be subject to public review and comment.

Downtown Edgerton

GLOSSARY

Allotment Management Plan (AMP): A written plan for the management of livestock grazing designed to attain prescribed goals for each grazing allotment (a parcel of public lands assigned to a grazing lessee). Each AMP is prepared in cooperation with the livestock operator. AMP's establish grazing use patterns or systems to stimulate the growth of the desired vegetation.

Animal Unit Month (AUM): A measure of forage or feed required to maintain one cow or five sheep one month. The AUM is primarily used in measuring the amount of forage on public lands.

Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC): An area within the public lands where special management attention is required to protect and prevent irreparable damage to important historic, cultural, or scenic values, fish and wildlife resources or other natural systems or processes, or to protect life and safety from natural hazards.

Custodial Livestock Management: Minimum regulation of grazing on public lands. Special stipulations will be added to grazing leases only when needed to prevent damage to public lands.

Environmental Impact Statement (EIS): A document prepared in response to the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969. The EIS assesses the impacts of a proposed action on the quality of the human environment. It also identifies mitigating measures that can be employed to reduce adverse impacts. The EIS is a tool that decision-makers use to weigh the environmental consequences of a proposed action.

Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA): A comprehensive federal law combining and consolidating many archaic and often conflicting federal land management laws. It is the first clear cut mandate Congress has ever given to the Bureau of Land Management for managing the 473 million acres of public lands under its jurisdiction. Also called the BLM Organic Act.

Forage: Plants available to and chosen for consumption by grazing animals.

Grazing Allotments: An area designated for the use of a prescribed number of livestock under one plan of management.

Land Exchange: Trading of public lands (with or without subsurface rights) for land in other ownerships which have value for public use, management and enjoyment. An exchange may be for the benefit of other federal agencies as well as BLM.

Management Framework Plan (MFP): A planning decision document which establishes, for a given planning area, land use allocations, coordination guidelines for multiple use and management objectives to be achieved for each class of land use or protection. It is the Bureau's Land Use Plan. It is prepared in three steps— Step One—Resource Recommendations; Step Two—Impact Analysis and Alternative Development; and Step Three—Decision Making.

Mitigation: A modification to lessen the negative results or increase the beneficial aspects of a proposed action. Mitigation is a critical element in environmental statements.

Multiple Use Management: A philosophy designed to enable public lands to be managed for as many uses simultaneously as practical. This philosophy recognizes diverse needs of the public and tries to relate these needs to the various resource values on the land.

National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA): This act requires that federal agencies consider and document the environmental impact of proposed legislation or actions that would have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment. Regulations promulgated by the Council on Environmental Quality require environmental statements to comply with this law.

National Register of Historic Places: The nation's official list of districts, sites, buildings, structures and objects significant in American history, architecture, archeology and culture.

The Secretary of the Interior was authorized to establish the National Register by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 which calls for the preservation of cultural properties of State and local as well as national significance.

Natural Landmark: A select portion of the nation's land and water that contains geological or ecological values of such distinctive quality as to be of national significance. Worthy sites may be designated as a Registered Natural Landmark.

Noxious Weeds: A weed defined by state law as being especially undesirable, troublesome or difficult to control.

Public Lands: Any lands or interest in land owned by the United States and administered by the Secretary of the Interior through the Bureau of Land Management, except lands located on the Outer Continental Shelf and lands held for the benefit of Indians, Aleuts and Eskimos.

Recreation and Public Purposes (R&PP): An act passed by Congress on June 14, 1926, which allows for the disposal of public lands to certain qualified organizations for recreational or public purpose needs.

Reclamation of Mined Land: The process of returning mined lands to a stable condition and form consistent with their premining productivity and use or other approved post-mining land use. Also called rehabilitation.

Sanitary Landfills: Land uses for disposing of solid municipal or industrial waste such as garbage, paper, sludge, cans, glass or other disposable items. Disposal is accomplished through placement in trenches and covered with soil. Landfills may be located on land where additional filling is needed prior to converting the land to other uses.

Transmission and Transportation Corridors: A strip of land where highways, railroads and powerlines and pipelines can be consolidated to restrict impacts to certain predetermined areas.

Watershed: The land surface contained within a natural surface water drainage system. Watersheds are delineated by a drainage device.

Withdrawal: The process by which an area of Federal land can be withheld or segregated from settlement, sale, location, or entry under some or all of the general land laws, including the General Mining Law of 1872. The purpose of withdrawal is to limit activities that otherwise could be permitted under such laws in order to maintain particular public values in the area, or to reserve the area for particular public purposes or programs. (FLPMA includes a more detailed definition, Sec. 103(j), and description of the withdrawal process, Sec. 204.)

Mariposa lily

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Comment Sheet

District Manager
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Casper, Wyoming 82601

Following are my comments regarding the Natrona Land Use Management Plan:

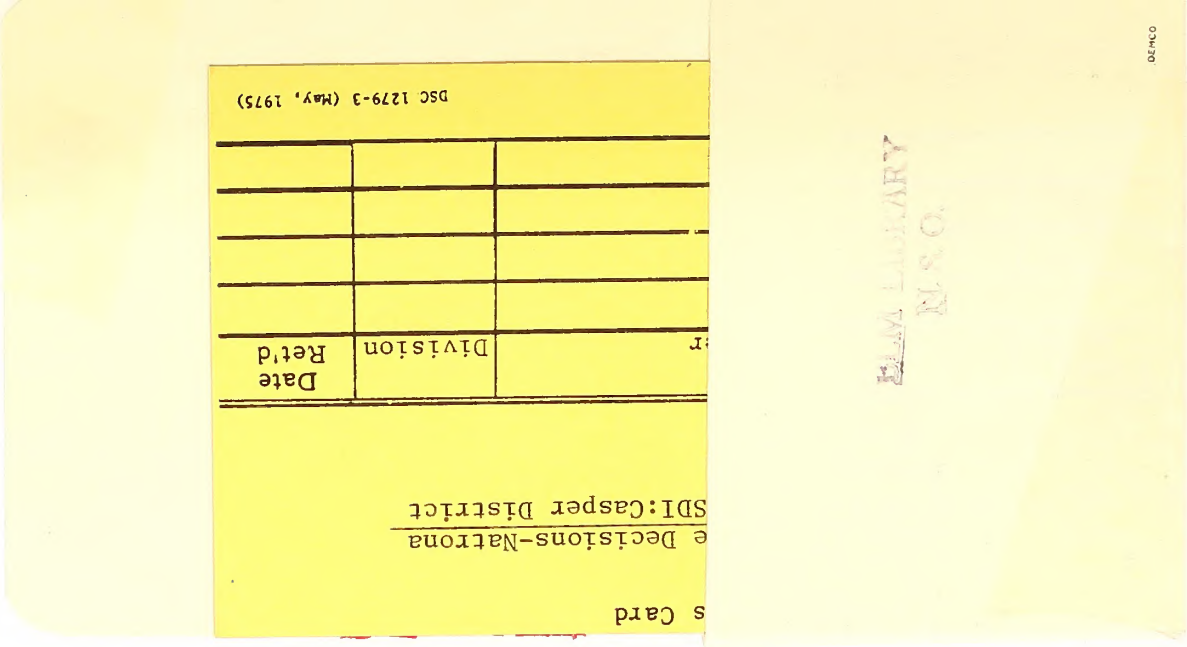
(tear here)

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____

Zip _____



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Note: If an address is not listed for a resource area, it is located at the district office headquarters.

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